BearPaw Legal Education & Resource Centre
NEWSWIRE

Aboriginal news from across Turtle Island and beyond
March 27 – April 2, 2014

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Aboriginal Arts & Culture

Inuit Art Centre dream nearer

Big donation boost for WAG's goal

By: Alexandra Paul

Posted: 03/27/2015 3:00 AM | Last Modified: 03/27/2015 12:04 PM |



An artist's rendition of a planned Inuit Art Centre in the Winnipeg Art Gallery for the world's largest collection of Inuit art.

The Winnipeg Art Gallery took a step closer Thursday to its dream of building an Inuit Art Centre for its collection of Inuit art, known as the largest public collection in the world.

"The WAG would like to be a vehicle for the art makers, to have a forum to communicate more of the land they come from," Stephen Borys, gallery director and CEO, told a news conference at the downtown gallery.



Fred Ford (centre), president of the Manitoba Inuit Association, talks with attendees at the announcement of TD Bank Group's financial support of $500,000 Thursday. (MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)



Stephen Borys, WAG director and CEO talks after the announcement of TD Bank Group's financial support of $500,000 for the WAG's new Inuit Art Centre. Thursday. (MIKE DEAL / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

Thursday's announcement showcased a $500,000 corporate donation from TD Bank for an artist-in-residence program to be housed at the proposed centre.

The gallery's plans call for a $60-million art centre on three levels with 40,000 square feet, to be located on the corner of St. Mary Avenue at Memorial Boulevard on land now occupied by the WAG Studio.

"You know, we want to build an Inuit Art Centre and there will be a building and we know it will happen," Borys said. "This Inuit Art Centre will house this renowned collection of Inuit art, but it will also facilitate the most state-of-the-art programming, education, looking at the economy, the ideas of the Arctic, of Inuit, of place and of geography," Borys said.

The WAG holds in trust the world's largest public collection of contemporary Inuit art. With more than 13,000 pieces, it makes up about half the gallery's total permanent collection, but only about 100 pieces are ever on display.

The proposed centre would allow Canadians to see about half the entire collection for the first time and at the same time watch artists at work.

"The art makers, who are behind these incredible objects, will have a platform, a voice and a way to communicate more of the land that they come from -- the land that very, very few Canadians ever get the chance to visit," Borys said.

The centre was first proposed in 2012 when the WAG selected American Michael Maltzan as the principal architect for the building.

A capital campaign has yet to take shape, but in a recent online interview with Canada's History Magazine, WAG officials suggested 2015 would be the earliest date it could break ground for construction.

Thursday's announcement highlighted the $500,000 donation from the TD Bank Group, which also holds one of the largest corporate collections of Inuit art.

"TD's gift will be designated to support the artist-in-residence and printmaking studio at the new Inuit Art Centre to be built here at the gallery," said David White, district vice-president of TD in Manitoba.

The centre is welcomed by many in the Inuit community who would like a permanent place for Canadians to see authentic Inuit culture.

Fred Ford, president of the Manitoba Inuit Association, said Inuit artists, especially printmakers, are eager for the new centre's new studio.

"Carving you can do outside, but when it comes to printmaking you need to have a building with good light and proper conditions, lots of room for the things that go into making prints," Ford said.

History

Updated on Friday, March 27, 2015 at 12:04 PM CDT: Corrects that centre will be 40,000 square feet

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/inuit-art-centre-dream-nearer-297754551.html

Young Churchill artist second in Inuit To Me art contest

Ian Graham / Thompson Citizen
March 27, 2015 07:37 AM

Ten-year-old Mikayla McCullough of Churchill was one of six children to receive prizes for their submissions to the 2014 Inuit To Me art contest, put on by the Metis Child and Family Services Authority (MCFSA) with support from the RBC Foundation.

McCullough took second spot in the 12-and-under category, which was won by 11-year-old Joel Bryant of St.-Lazare, with 11-year-old Jonas Kusmizkij of Douglas third. Natasha Fafard from St.-Lazare won the 13-and-up category, with Cheyenne Keeper from Komarno second and Elayna Paddock Thiessen of Brandon third.

The winners received IPad minis and Inukshuk trophies for their submission, while the others in the top three got Inukshuk trophies and cash prizes.

Overall, 130 young artists submitted their work for consideration, almost twice as many as in 2013, the contest's first year. Artists were asked to express what they believed to be Inuit and many schools used the contest as part of their curriculum to teach students about Inuit culture. Many submissions featured the Arctic tundra, wildlife, sled dogs,

igloos, the northern lights and Inukshuks and others emulated Inuit art itself, including the Inuit style of stone block printing. The contest was open to Manitoba children and youth aged six to 19.

“Artistic expression dynamically helps carry traditions and history forward and that is why RBC is honoured to support the Inuit to Me art contest,” said RBC’s Annette Sabourin, vice-president of aboriginal markets and north of 60, in a press release announcing the winners. “We applaud the Metis Child and Family Services Authority and its agencies on this initiative to engage youth in learning about and expressing their vision of aboriginal culture creatively. We are proud to build on over 100 years of partnership we’ve had with indigenous communities, and are inspired by what lies ahead.”

Rita Cullen, boar chairperson of the MCFSA, said the contest was a tool to help educate young Manitobans.

“This contest has helped promote a greater awareness of aboriginal cultures among young people, and demonstrated that understanding and appreciation of Inuit culture is prevalent across the province,” she said.

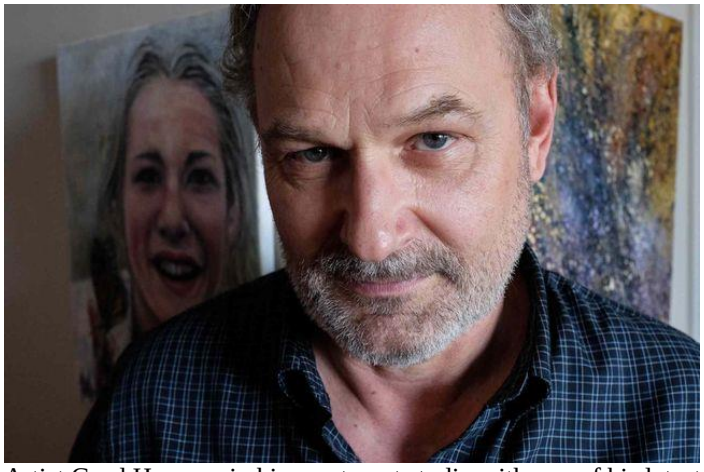
The contest raised awareness that the MCFSA provides child welfare services to Inuit children and families in the province, said MCFSA CEO Billie Schibler. “It was therefore important that we challenge young people to create art that depicts the Inuit people and their way of life with this year’s contest.”

- See more at: http://www.thompsoncitizen.net/news/nickel-belt/young-churchill-artist-second-in-inuit-to-me-art-contest-1.1806414#sthash.AdYnYD9e.dpuf

A local artist has been painting portraits of indigenous people who died tragically

By: Gordon Sinclair Jr.

Posted: 03/28/2015 3:46 AM | Comments: 2



Artist Gord Hagman in his apartment studio with one of his latest works; a 13-year-old girl who committed suicide after being cyber bullied.

Before there was a campaign to use expressive photo portraits in an attempt to bring us face to face with racism in Winnipeg, an obscure local artist was painting some of the city's most iconic indigenous visages in ways that almost seem to bring Brian Sinclair, Faron Hall and Tina Fontaine back to life.

Especially for the families to whom he gifts them.



Esther Grant holds a painting by artist Gord Hagman of Brian Sinclair outside of the courthouse, during the inquest into Sinclair's death. (BORIS MINKEVICH / WINNIPEG FREE PRESS)

One of those comforting portraits, the one of Tina the teenage runaway and murder victim that was featured on Thursday's Free Press front page, hangs above the TV set in her great-aunt Thelma Favel's home.

A place where Thelma says good morning and good night every day to the little girl she raised.

But how did Gord Hagman capture the spirits of three tortured souls who died so tragically, and the lesser known others he paints -- the teenagers who die by suicide and the young addicts by drug overdose.

Perhaps more importantly, why does he do it?

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We are standing in the Osborne Village highrise apartment Hagman shares with his wife of 20 years, Susan Routledge, their cat and the various people he paints but have never actually walked through the door.

We are standing in front of the portrait of Brian Sinclair, the one he painted for himself after giving the first to the family, when I ask if he ever knew Brian. Or Faron, or Tina?

"I have never met any of them," he says, laughing.

I get the joke.

He means not while they were alive.

"Kind of met them here, I guess."

Brian Sinclair's portrait hangs in Hagman's home, much the way Tina's does in Thelma's.

Hauntingly.

Standing in the portrait's shadow is to feel the presence of the little legless man from the streets who died all but invisible in a hospital waiting room waiting hopelessly in his wheelchair for someone to notice him. For someone to save his life by simply changing his catheter.

It's as if Hagman channeled the spirits of his subjects.

I wonder if he feels that spiritual connection.

"Yes," he says. "But I don't know why. I don't know how. There's no system, there's no ritual."

But, in a way, there is.

"I visualize them. I visualize their faces, I visualize them being alive, having a conversation with them.

"I just empathize, almost supernaturally with the situation. And then I often feel like the spirit of the person is talking to me. And they're loving me because they're going, 'Thank you for taking the time to care about me, even though you don't even know me.' And I hear this voice. It's kind of loony, right?"

No, not really. But it looked that way.

When he painted Faron Hall, Hagman danced a jig so happily Susan asked her husband if he was channeling the Homeless Hero. That painting, chosen purposefully from a photo taken after a fight that left Faron's face stitched and bloody-eyed, hangs inside the front door of the Red Road Lodge on Main Street.

When Hagman painted Tina Fontaine, he simply struggled.

There was so much sadness.

As for Brian Sinclair, the painting that started the trilogy, that one came specifically from what he saw in the photo he worked from.

"I saw something in his face," Hagman says. "A desperation."

But there was more to it than that.

Where it really came from was his own childhood, and the childhoods of the special-needs kids he helped for 20 years as an education assistant.

Some of those kids couldn't speak for themselves, some were in wheelchairs, and some needed their catheters changed.

"My job as an EA was a training ground for my heart," Hagman says.

But it was a heart already made to reach out and help others.

He recalls being in Grade 4 in Swan River and there being an aboriginal boy in the class who was 13.

"Nobody liked him, nobody talked to him."

Except Hagman.

And where did that kind of caring come from?

It came from his mother, a blonde, green-eyed one-quarter Cherokee who drank, got into bar brawls and didn't come home some nights.

Yet it was his mother's spirit that "lifted" her son up and helped him excel at school. Even though he could have gone higher, he chose commercial art and Red River College instead of fine art and university.

His mother died years ago.

"But," he says, "I feel closer to her now than ever."

That brought me to the why question.

Why do you paint portraits of such physically and psychologically tortured souls?

"Because that's where I've come from," he answers. "The life I've seen through my mom's mental illness."

It was later, after I was going through the notes from our conversation, that I noticed something else about his mother. He felt closer than ever to her.

That prompted me to call him back at home with one last question.

Have you done a portrait of your mother?

"I've not," he said.

You should, I advised.

It would bring her even closer.

And give Brian some more company.

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/opinion/columnists/portraits-of-lives-past-297874971.html

An explanation of Inuit throat-singing

By Staff The Canadian Press
March 29, 2015 | 12:15 pm

IQALUIT, Nunavut – Here are a few facts about Inuit throat-singing:

What is it: Originally a game between Inuit women when men were away hunting. Two women face each other and trade off short, sharp, rhythmic inhalations and exhalations and sounds. The winner is the one who keeps it up the longest.

How it works: The leader starts chanting a syllable, word or name, leaving a gap for her partner to respond. The meaningless syllables generally portray sounds of nature, cries of animals or birds or sounds of everyday life. The two singers trade off introducing sounds and rhythms until one gets tired or can’t keep up. Many throat-singers now perform solo.

Technique: Pitch is not an element, although accurate production of sounds and rhythm is crucial.Good breathing technique is required. Some learn a form of circular breathing,

which allows a performer to breathe in through the nose while exhaling through the mouth.

Who does it: Canadian Inuit, the Tuva people of Mongolia, the South African Xhosa, Russian Chukchi, Ainu of northern Japan.

Where to hear it: Once banned by Christian missionaries, throat-singing is enjoying a comeback. Numerous examples are posted on the web. Canadian singer Tanya Tagaq uses it extensively in her own albums and on her collaboration with Icelandic singer Bjork. Nelson Tagoona combines throat-singing and beat-boxing, derived from hip-hop. Throat-singing appears occasionally in popular culture, from "The Simpsons Movie" to the theme music for the CBC-TV series "Arctic Air."

Direct Link: http://metronews.ca/news/canada/1325966/an-explanation-of-inuit-throat-singing/

Toonik Tyme founder recalls 50-year-old Iqaluit festival's origins

"Frobisher Bay in those days had nothing going for it" — Bryan Pearson

PETER VARGA



Mayor Bryan Pearson, then of the hamlet of Frobisher Bay, right, chats with John Diefenbaker, then Progressive Conservative leader of the opposition and former prime minister, and Gene Rhéaume, MP for the Northwest Territories, far left, in April 1965. Diefenbaker was in Frobisher Bay, as Iqaluit was then called, to preside over the community's first Toonik Tyme festival as Honorary Toonik. (FILE PHOTO)


Bryan Pearson poses with his dog Kamik at his home in Iqaluit. (PHOTO BY PETER VARGA)

As Iqaluit's Toonik Tyme spring festival gears up for its 50th anniversary, few in the Nunavut capital of Iqaluit can dare claim to know how it all started any better than longtime resident and former mayor Bryan Pearson.

Frobisher Bay, as Iqaluit was first called, was known to very few outside of the Canadian Arctic in 1964 — other than Canadian and American military personnel.

The village of about 2,000 people had grown up around a military air base that had shut down the year before.

And, as the mayor of the time, Pearson recalls "Frobisher Bay in those days had nothing going for it."

That's when he and a small group community leaders decided it was time to create a spring festival, starting in 1965 — to celebrate the end of winter and promote the community internationally, Pearson said.

Members of the hamlet council, Inuit leaders, and Frobisher Bay's lead RCMP officer, among others, first met in the fall of 1964 and settled on the name Toonik Tyme.

The name is a play on words that refers to the Tuniit, a people who lived in the eastern Arctic prior before the arrival of the Inuit about 1,000 years ago. "Tyme is the old English spelling," Pearson said.

Frobisher Bay's population at the time was a majority of Inuit, he said, with little in the way of communication with the outside world other than through CBC Radio, telex, and a telephone line that ran through the Distance Early Warning Line system.

For entertainment, there wasn't much more than a small movie theatre.

“There was nothing else. No hockey, no TV,” Pearson said. “There was a great need for something — so we developed this idea. We anticipated games and things that would make Toonik Tyme unique.”

Obvious events showcased the expertise of Inuit culture, such as igloo-building, hunting, seal-skinning, and whip-cracking.

Others drew on the quirks of settled life — such as the honey-bag fling. Participants didn’t actually throw bags full of their personal sewage, but bags full of water.

Snowmobile races would be among the most popular events. The first ones were around the community, with a “Monte Carlo start,” Pearson said.

“The drivers had to run to their machine and start the thing, and race around over the hills. So you could stand and watch the race.”

Pearson and his fellow organizers of that first festival 50 years ago decided that Toonik Tyme should promote the obscure Arctic community to the outside world as well.

To accomplish that, “one of the important concepts of the new festival was that we would have high-profile guests who we would appoint as the ‘Honorary Toonik,’” Pearson said.

“The purpose of that was to bring an international focus onto the community. Because nobody had ever heard of Frobisher Bay then, other than a few military people, and a few DEW Line people.”

“Then we were fortunate to get a hold of a high-profile guy, who was John Diefenbaker — who had been prime minister.”

Diefenbaker’s party had lost the federal election in 1963. The former PM was leader of the opposition to a minority Liberal government at the time.

Pearson recalls greeting Diefenbaker, his wife and his brother, as well as then-MP of the Northwest Territories, Gene Rhéaume, upon their arrival at Frobisher Bay airport for the first Toonik Tyme in April 1965.

The festival would continue to appoint high-profile guests as Honorary Tooniks for the next three decades. Among them were Prince Charles in 1975, heir to the British throne, Governor General Roland Michener, and three commissioners of the Northwest Territories.

The celebrity guests would bring “their entourage, and the press, and we got all of the publicity that was good for the community,” Pearson said. “That began to put the community on the map. That was the whole purpose of it.”

Pearson said in a Facebook comment April 1 that he will become this year's Honorary Toonik, and that he's honoured to serve in that role.

Festival organizers found it was fairly easy to draw big-name bands and musicians to perform in Frobisher Bay as well, so long as they covered their airfare and accommodations in the community.

"For the bands, it was a big exciting gig, to be able to play in Frobisher Bay," he said. "Because most Canadians dream of going north, and never get the opportunity."

Toonik Tyme brought country band Chef Adams to Frobisher Bay for the first festival.

Montreal-based promoter Donald K. Donald helped Pearson bring others to the community over the years, including April Wine and the Spoons in the 1970s and 1980s.

Attracting Canadian hit performers was a mainstay of the festival through most of its history.

Many contests and activities from year one have also stood the test of time. Others, like snowmobile races, have gone through various changes.

Some years after the first festival, "I came up with the brilliant idea of the Lake Harbour (now Kimmirut) skidoo race — which in retrospect was kind of silly," Pearson said.

"It was sponsored by Molson Breweries, to the tune of $10,000, and the skidoo drivers of course loved that."

Racers would take off from a starting line teeming with spectators, in a cloud of smoke. Nobody would see them for a few hours. And no one would see them return either, as they had no way of knowing when the racers would come back.

"The skidoo drivers loved it, but as a spectator sport it wasn't much," Pearson said. Molson's sponsorship also aroused controversy.

The Iqaluit-Kimmirut race has been part of the festival, off and on over the years. Organizers put the race back into the schedule in 2014, after an absence of several years, and promise to hold one for the 50th festival, so long as weather permits.

As Pearson sees it, Toonik Tyme's success now depends on one individual — the president of the Toonik Tyme Society — who relies on volunteers.

"I think people have lost sight of the tourist development concept of Toonik Tyme. The problem is that it's usually up to an individual to keep it going," he said.

"The main beneficiary would be the city and its elements, businesses and hotels, who would prosper from a well-organized Toonik Tyme."

Pearson pointed to other capital cities that put on big winter and springtime festivals, such as Whitehorse, Yellowknife, and Quebec City, where governments recognize the benefit and take on a leading role.

“It should be done on that basis. There should be a budget, in the city,” he said, adding that the territorial government also has a role to play.

“Toonik Tyme, as simple as it is, and as limited as it is, has a major impact on the welfare and happiness of the people who live here.”

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674toonik_tyme_founder_recalls_50-year-old_nunavut_festivals_origins/

First Nations artists look to future

Artist-run centre Tribe collaborates with Mendel for one of gallery's final shows

By Stephanie McKay, The Starphoenix April 1, 2015



Curator Wanda Nanibush installs the upcoming Tribe exhibit at the Mendel Gallery. It opens Friday and runs until June 7.

As the Mendel Art Gallery prepares to close its doors, one local arts organization is using the space to celebrate the past and get excited about the future. Tribe, one of the first First Nations artist-run centres in Canada, is 20 years old this year.

Wanda Nanibush, a Toronto-based artist and activist, said the centre has had a huge impact on First Nations art.

"It's been monumental in changing people's perceptions of what First Nations art is and can be. Their focus on some radical contemporary work that's very challenging is one of the ways in which they've definitely opened the doors for indigenous art and changed people's mind not about the art but also the people and the politics."

Nanibush is the curator of The Fifth World, an exhibition that celebrates Tribe's 20th anniversary.

Tribe, a Saskatoon-based artist-run centre, presents established and emerging aboriginal artists. Since 1995, it has showcased work by local, national and international artists, despite not having a dedicated gallery space.

"They were kind of a radical organization because they decided to be a centre without a space. They constantly collaborate," Nanibush says.

For this landmark anniversary, the group is collaborating with the Mendel in one of its final shows before its transition to the Remai Modern Art Gallery at River Landing.

Nanibush was asked by Tribe co-founder Lori Blondeau to curate the show. The show's theme was inspired by the novel Almanac of the Dead. The Fifth World speaks to the birth of a new consciousness where we move forward as human beings and reconnect to the Earth.

Though the exhibit celebrates the past, it is also very forwardlooking. Nanibush said The Fifth World showcases some of the up and coming, mostly Canadian artists that will shape the future of Tribe.

The exhibit includes work by Ursula Johnson, who created 16 woven busts out of black ash.

The pieces are based on Mi'kmaq baskets, but take the tradition in a unique new direction. They were woven over the heads of volunteers. The piece is arranged in a circle, symbolic of both a round dance and the Idle No More movement, and serves as an anchor piece for the show.

Nanibush was one of the organizers of Idle No More in Toronto, and continues to work for the movement.

"Our artists are not separate from these movements. They are working hard for our selfdetermination and sovereignty as well," she said. "I think the diversity and literal beauty of the work is something that will blow people's minds. And I think there is a real political complexity in the work that hopefully is challenging and engaging for people."

The Fifth World opens Friday and runs until June 7, at which time the Mendel will close its doors for good. Nanibush will give a sneak peek of the exhibition tonight at 7 p.m. There will be no opening night event on Friday, but Tribe will host an anniversary party at the gallery on May 28 at 8 p.m. A two-day symposium follows on May 29 and 30. The spring show at the Mendel also includes the 43rd edition of School Art, which features more than 200 pieces from 80 Saskatoon schools.

Acting chief curator Sandra Fraser said even though the exhibitions weren't specifically chosen to close out the Mendel, they are both fitting shows.

"It feels like a really nice way to say goodbye to the building with a show that has so much community appeal. And then to be hosting the Tribe anniversary exhibition is important because its an indicator of our relationship with other arts organizations in the city and beyond," she said.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/entertainment/First+Nations+artists+look+future/10936794/story.html

Aboriginal Business & Finance

Penticton Indian Band Earns Development Award

March 27, 2015 by **Wendy McLeod**



A major accolade was collected by the Penticton Indian Band (PIB) Development Corporation.

The corporation was recently awarded the Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation Award for 2015 by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business.

“Congratulations to the Penticton Indian Band Development Corporation for demonstrating the vision and courage in the world of business essential for business success,” said CCAB President and CEO JP Gladu.

Plenty of construction has been taking place on PIB land, including the $9 million fish hatchery project which opened in 2014. Plans for Phase 2 of the Skaha Hills development were also announced recently.



“The Aboriginal Economic Development Corporation of the Year Award proudly gives all Canadians an opportunity to learn more about Aboriginal business success and its role in creating business certainty and sustainable prosperity,” continued Gladu.

The Penticton Indian Band is the largest reserve in the B.C. with 46,000 acres of land and population of 1,034 members.

Currently, PIB is working with PIB Community members and PIB Lands Department in putting together an official Comprehensive Community Plan. This plan will help identify lands that are to be protected and those which will be designated for residential, industrial, commercial and recreational development.

Direct Link:
http://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/South_Okanagan/15/03/27/Penticton_Indian_Band_Earns_Development_Award

Aboriginal Community Development

Aboriginal Affairs defends rejection of Saskatchewan airstrip

Minister Bernard Valcourt asserts in Parliament the federal government is not responsible

By Bonnie Allen, CBC News Posted: Mar 26, 2015 9:27 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 26, 2015 11:53 PM CT


Nurse Mo Johnston says Southend patients don't receive proper medical evacuation in emergencies without an airstrip. (Chanss Lagaden/CBC News)

A Saskatchewan First Nation's plea for an airstrip was raised in Parliament on Thursday, but Minister of Aboriginal Affairs Bernard Valcourt maintained it's not federal jurisdiction.

Niki Ashton, the NDP Aboriginal Affairs critic, pressed Valcourt on the issue — which was exposed in a CBC News story on Wednesday — that without an airstrip, people living in Southend, Sask. must rely on a ground ambulance 220 kilometres away in the town of La Ronge, Sask.

"It's a five-hour round trip on a gravel road. People's lives are at risk," Ashton said. "Will the minister stop making excuses, come to the table, and fund this life-saving airstrip?"

Minister Bernard Valcourt responded that the airstrip in question is under provincial jurisdiction.


NDP Aboriginal Affairs Niki Ashton questions Minister Bernard Valcourt (Question Period)

Jurisdiction fight continues

Earlier this year, the Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation applied for $6 million in funding from Aboriginal Affairs to build an airstrip for its community 600 kilometres northeast of Saskatoon.

Since the community of Southend is carved into an island of rock, the only suitable land for a 1,000-metre runway is located off-reserve. Aboriginal Affairs rejected the Southend application, citing the off-reserve location of the project and its other capital priorities of schools and water treatment.

Meanwhile, the Saskatchewan government told CBC News that it won't pitch in money either. Transportation spokesperson Doug Wakabayashi said that the First Nation should find a compromise with the federal government.

Valcourt's office later clarified that the minister was referring to both the First Nation's application to build a new airstrip off-reserve, and the potential to upgrade a private off-reserve fishing lodge airstrip that was shut down in November after the owner died. However, that airstrip was too short for an air ambulance.

Minister argues Southend has adequate service

In Parliament, Valcourt also suggested that Southend is receiving air support.

"The First Nation in question receives, currently, medical emergency evacuation by helicopter or planes," Valcourt said.

In fact, helicopters are rarely used for medical evacuations in Southend. Charter helicopters in that region are not fitted with medical equipment. They fly slower and cost more than fixed wing planes.

The STARS helicopter based in Saskatoon usually stays within 200 kilometres of the city and rarely flies north of Prince Albert.

STARS spokesman Cam Heke told CBC News that while flying to Southend isn't outside the realm of possibility, it would present challenges.

"We would be taking into consideration that we won't be available to respond within that higher population base around the major cities," Heke said.

Meanwhile, Mamawetan Churchill River Health Region has a contract with a charter airline, Transwest Air, to respond to emergencies in Southend. However, the company is constrained by the lack of airstrip.

Transwest can land Twin Otters on the frozen ice or float planes on water, but only during certain times of the year and under constraints such as good weather and daylight hours.

'So, if you were lucky and you had your emergency before noon, then you could probably get out in time in the winter.'- *Mo Johnson, Head Nurse in Southend*

"So, if you were lucky and you had your emergency before noon, then you could probably get out in time in the winter," Mo Johnston, the nurse-in-charge in Southend, told CBC News.

Head nurse calls for airstrip in Southend

Johnston worked in the Northwest Territories for 24 years before taking over the post in Southend last year.

"The situation here, at the moment, is more or less the way it was when I first started in the territories in the early '90s," Johnston said.



Southend nurses Frieda Olson and Mo Johnston say an airstrip to allow air ambulance services would save lives. (Bonnie Allen/CBC News)

These days, the Northwest Territories government contracts a private company that is required to have the capability and aircraft to land in every community in the territory. It can land a fully-equipped King Air ambulance, staffed with advanced care paramedics and critical care nurses, in 25 of 27 government-owned airports.

In comparison, the chartered plane that lands on ice or water in Southend is staffed with a basic to intermediate paramedic.

"Even by northern standards, the services [in Southend] fall short here because of the lack of the air strip," Johnston said. "They don't have access to the healthcare people in the south do, or even people further north do who have an airstrip."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/aboriginal-affairs-defends-rejection-of-saskatchewan-airstrip-1.3011503

Three found dead in fire in Alberta aboriginal community

GLEICHEN, Alta. — The Canadian Press

Published Saturday, Mar. 28 2015, 7:37 PM EDT

Last updated Saturday, Mar. 28 2015, 7:39 PM EDT

Three people were found dead in a fire in a First Nation community east of Calgary.

The Mounties said the bodies of two men, both aged 28, and a woman, 25, were discovered after the fire was brought under control on the Siksika Nation on Saturday morning.

Police said neighbours called RCMP after noticing smoke coming from the windows.

Tom Littlechild, the director of emergency services for the Siksika Nation, said flames were already coming out the windows of the kitchen and living room windows by the time the community's firefighters arrived.

Littlechild said the firefighters called for extra help from the fire department in the neighbouring community of Cluny, and they were able to put the flames out quickly. When they got inside, a man and a woman were discovered in one bedroom, and the other man was discovered in another bedroom.

"The fire, the bulk of it, was on the east end of the house where the kitchen and living room were. The bedrooms, for all intents and purposes, were not really touched by flames at all," Littlechild said.

There were no reports that anyone else was in the house at the time of the fire, Littlechild said.

He said the home did not have a working smoke detector.

RCMP, the Siksika Nation fire department and the Cluny fire department are still investigating the cause of the fire, but police said in a news release the blaze appears to have started inside the home and doesn't appear suspicious.

The release said the three victims were all residents of the Siksika Nation and had only recently moved into the house.

Their names haven't been released and police said they are contacting their families. Autopsies will be performed in Calgary next week, the release said.

The Siksika Nation, which is about an hour's drive east of Calgary, is home to approximately 7,000 people. It was hard hit when the Bow River spilled its banks in June 2013 and about 170 homes were flooded.

Littlechild said he doesn't recall a fatal fire in the community in over five years.

He said he didn't know the victims of the fire personally, but he said counselling would be available for other members of his department.

"Even though it's a tragic event, the positive thing I guess to try to get across to everyone is the importance of having a working smoke alarm in your home," Littlechild said.

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/alberta/three-found-dead-in-fire-in-alberta-aboriginal-community/article23678033/

Ipperwash cottage owners & First Nations members hold meeting over beach vehicle ban



CTV London
Published Sunday, March 29, 2015 5:04PM EDT
Last Updated Sunday, March 29, 2015 6:23PM EDT

Members of the Ipperwash and Port Franks community gathered Sunday afternoon for an informational meeting concerning a recent dispute over vehicles driving along the beach.

A temporary agreement was reached last week over the issue but concerned parties involved had their say.

"This has been 100 percent endorsed by our council and it does anticipate that part of the long term strategy may be vehicles on the beach," says Loraine George of the Kettle & Stony Point First Nation.



A vehicle drives on Ipperwash Beach along Lake Huron, east of Sarnia, Ont. on Friday, Dec. 5, 2014. (Bryan Bicknell / CTV London)

That wasn't what the over 100 home owners who gathered at the meeting wanted to hear.

Late last year, members of the Kettle and Stony Point First Nations made a bid to reclaim the land by removing barriers to allow vehicular traffic along the beach.

That prompted some cottage owners to set up their own barriers.

Last week, an agreement was made between local officials, community members and First Nations to ban traffic on the beach for the remainder of this year as the group works on a long term solution.

Cottage owner Mark Lindsay helped organize Sunday's meeting.

"Some of the parties sitting at the table are here today to educate everyone a little bit and I hope we can find a way to get more people involved, to move forward with what's going on.

It (temporary beach traffic ban) allows us to continue this discussion without the stress of potential conflict involved," says Lindsay.

Direct Link: http://london.ctvnews.ca/ipperwash-cottage-owners-first-nations-members-hold-meeting-over-beach-vehicle-ban-1.2303091

New Brunswick First Nations get help to avoid flooding

By Staff The Canadian Press
March 30, 2015 | 4:12 pm


Water from the St. John River covers the highway in Maugerville, N.B. on Thursday, April 17, 2014.

FREDERICTON – The federal government is spending $1.7 million to help prevent spring flooding on eight susceptible First Nations communities in New Brunswick.

Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt says work is underway to remove the vast amounts of snow that has fallen over the past couple of months.

He says crews are moving the snowpack away from key infrastructure and houses to reduce the impact of the spring melt.

New Brunswick's Emergency Measures Organization has said there is more snow on the ground than normal in central and southern New Brunswick.

Removal is taking place at Elsipogtog, Bouctouche, Indian Island, Esgenoopetitj, Eel Ground, Eel River Bar, Tobique and Metepenagiag First Nations.

Direct Link: http://metronews.ca/news/canada/1326989/first-nations-get-help-to-avoid-flooding/

Okanagan Nation chief says Canadian government needs to change before First Nations conditions will improve



Alliance of First Nations chief Perry Bellegarde (left) and Westbank First Nations chief Robert Louie (right) say First Nations must push for equality. B.C. First Nations met with United Nations special rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz on Tuesday.

by Kevin Parnell - Kelowna Capital News

posted Mar 31, 2015 at 2:00 PM

The head of the Okanagan Nation Alliance says the rights of First Nations people across Canada have worsened under the Stephen Harper government and are only going to get worse until a new government is elected that respects the rights of First Nations people.

ONA grand chief Stewart Phillip made the comments to kick off a day-long gathering of First Nations leaders from around B.C. who are together on Westbank First Nations land to meet with a United Nations representative and talk about issues facing indigenous people in Canada.

"The Harper government has been hostile towards First Nations and until there is a change in government things are only going to get worse," said Phillip at a press conference on Wednesday prior to the information session.

Phillip pointed to a July 2014 report by the United Nations on Canada's relationship with its indigenous people that stated that initiatives undertaken by all levels of government to address problems have been insufficient.

"It is these systemic violations of our internationally acknowledged human rights that First Nations people want the government of Canada to acknowledge and begin rectifying," said Phillip. "This is a very significant time in our respective nation's history where we have an opportunity to formally bring forth, to the United Nations, the difficulties that the indigenous people in British Columbia are facing today."

Other native leaders echoed the sentiments of Phillip including Westbank First Nations chief Robert Louie, who pointed to the success of his people in Westbank as an example of how native groups can thrive if they are given the equality they deserve.

"Indigenous people have been seen as second-class citizens and that has happened since the point of first contact (with European settlers)," said Louie. "What we need is equality and as soon as that happens First Nations can move quickly."

Louie says First Nations must push to be self-sufficient and self governing and said places like the nearby Sensisyusten school, where students are taught academic courses but are also taught the history of their people as a way to maintain First Nations traditions, are ways for First Nations groups to maintain their traditionss

Other issues the native leaders raised include murdered and missing women, land claims, fishing, housing and self government.

Assembly of First Nations national chief Perry Bellegarde, who represents over 600 First Nations across Canada, says there is a huge gap between indigenous and non-indigenous people, noting while Canada is ranked fairly high compared to other countries around the world when it comes to well-being, the conditions of Canada's native people are much worse.

"Canada is rated as a great place to live," said Bellegarde. "But while Canada is way up here, its indigenous people are rated way lower. It's this gap that we need to change and as soon as we can do that it will be better for everyone."

Several presentations to the United Nations special rapporteur Victoria Tauli-Corpuz were going to take place on Tuesday. Tauli-Corpuz said she was there to listen to the concerns and learn about the issues facing First Nations groups in B.C. and in Canada.

Direct Link: http://www.kelownacapnews.com/news/298211551.html

Aboriginal Education & Youth

Alberta school boards lose $1.4 million in grants for aboriginal students

Trevor Howell, Calgary Herald More from Trevor Howell, Calgary Herald
Published on: March 28, 2015
Last Updated: March 28, 2015 11:31 AM MDT

Critics are questioning the Progressive Conservatives' commitment to addressing the province's troubling education achievement gap after the government slashed $1.4 million in grants to school boards for Alberta's aboriginal students.

Alberta Education provides funding to school boards based on the number of students identified as First Nations, Metis and Inuit. The 2015-16 budget, released Thursday, sees the government cut 3.1 per cent from that non-teacher compensation grant.

"These are our most vulnerable kids," said Mark Ramsankar, president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. "You talk about our northern areas where you've got very high FNMI students, when you cut that budget it's just going to exacerbate the problem that we already see.

"When they say it's a priority yet it's one of the areas they cut, your words and actions don't align," Ramsankar said.

Premier Jim Prentice, who also serves as minister of aboriginal relations, has repeatedly said the gaps in education achievement between aboriginal and non-aboriginal students is "unacceptable."

The province has struggled to improve high school graduation rates among its First Nations, Metis and Inuit student population, which lag provincial averages for non-aboriginal students.

Provincially, the overall three-year high school completion rate has improved since 2009, from 71.5 per cent to 74.9 per cent. Similarly, dropout rates fell to 3.3 per cent.

But those figures are far worse among Alberta First Nations, Metis and Inuit students with only 43.6 per cent graduating high school in three years and where the dropout rate hovers around 7.8 per cent.

"The achievement gap is most substantial and distressing to myself, to the premier, to the people in the First Nations community," Education Minister Gordon Dirks said Friday. "It is something that has to be addressed."

Dirks said the province remains committed to a memorandum of understanding that includes the federal government and First Nations chiefs to address the problem through provincial initiatives.

Alberta Education's 2015-16 business plan, which outlines the government's strategic direction and priority initiatives, directs the ministry to eliminate that achievement gap, increase the numbers of First Nations, Metis and Inuit education professionals, and implement new provincial standards for education service agreements for First Nations students.

Provincial performance targets for high school completion rates (within five years) of self-identified First Nations, Metis and Inuit students is set at 51 per cent for the 2015-16 school year and rises to 53 per cent by 2019-20.

Calgary's public and school boards lose a combined $182,ooo next year because of the 3.1 per cent cut to FNMI funding in next year's budget.

"It does not speak to assisting kids across this province," said Alexandra Jurisic, president of the Calgary Catholic Teachers' Association.

"For our aboriginal First Nations, Metis and Inuit youth, who are the fastest-growing population in the province at six per cent, (the funding cut) doesn't speak to addressing the socio-cultural changes that they're facing."

Dirks said school boards can reallocate non-teacher compensation grants to areas they identify as a priority. However, many of those grants, including funding for ESL students, were cut 3.1 per cent as well.

"We'll monitor as we go forward," Dirks said. "I have every confidence that boards will do everything they can … (and) that they will be able to sustain high-quality education in our province for our children."

Helen Clease, president of the Alberta School Boards Association, said the province needs to move away from providing grants to boards and instead focus on increasing per-student funding.

"When we get that per pupil grant we're allowed to allocate it where we need it most within our system," said Clease.

"When they give us a grant that says it's going to support one area, that doesn't support every school board," she said. "It has to be that local decision making process … that's the flexibility we need otherwise it's one size fits all and no one's needs get met."

Direct Link: http://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/alberta-school-boards-lose-1-4-million-in-grants-for-aboriginal-students

New conservation program coming to First Nations schools

By Teri Fikowski Reporter Global News
March 27, 2015 6:36 pm



A student learns about a burrowing owl during the launch of a new program coming to Treaty 4 schools.

REGINA – A new curriculum coming to Treaty 4 Schools focuses on getting students out of the classroom to learn about land conservation through an Indigenous lens.

Students, teachers and elders gathered in Fort Qu'Appelle Friday for the official launch of the *Learning The Land Program.*

"More opportunities need to happen in our school system for environment outdoor education games," said Scott Fulton, one of the program's coordinators. "Get them outside the classroom where learning can be a little more fresh."

A fall 2014 pilot project taught kids first-hand about the traditional, cultural and scientific aspects of Saskatchewan's native prairie landscape through a variety of First Nations cultural activities.

Ken Lonechild, another program coordinator, said an ice fishing fieldtrip taught students about species at risk of extinction in Saskatchewan, while also learning the importance of sharing and working with peers.

"The scientific part of it merged with the traditional knowledge just goes hand and hand with building a better learning experience."

The program is expected to be implemented into all 11 Treaty 4 schools in the fall.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/1908702/new-conservation-program-coming-to-first-nations-schools/

With education comes opportunity

Any comprehensive plan to advance First Nations needs educational component

By Joseph Quesnel, Frontier Centre

First posted: Friday, March 27, 2015 10:43 AM CDT | Updated: Saturday, March 28, 2015 06:43 AM CDT



The federal government has recently shown its willingness to help First Nations education in Manitoba.

Ottawa announced it is entering into a partnership with four northern Manitoba First Nations. The Indigenous communities are Bunibonibee Cree Nation (Oxford House), God's Lake First Nation (God's Lake Narrows), Manto Sipi Nation (God's River), and Wasagamak First Nation (Wasagamak).

The money injected will go towards the construction and renovation of northern schools.

Manitoba First Nations, in turn, should support the federal government by attempting to salvage the First Nation Education Act, an initiative that was panned by many Indigenous chiefs earlier this year. Chiefs did not like the way the bill was developed and supported by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) under National Chief Shawn Atleo. Atleo himself eventually lost the support of the chiefs in time. Many of them wanted the cash injection but not the changes to the system. Knowing that the chiefs wanted all the cash without the accountability that came with it, the federal government pulled the historic bill.

On-reserve schools, for the most part, lack standards and enforcement mechanisms. The Indian Act itself does not say much about First Nations education.

The First Nation Control of First Nations Act, as the proposed legislation was supposed to be called, was an historic initiative intended to fix the broken Aboriginal education system. The bill also came with predictable funding.

While not perfect, the proposed bill was a good compromise between the federal government and First Nations. Indigenous leaders and activists should not expect everything they wanted in this new bill. That is not how negotiation works. There has to be some give and take involved.

Perhaps Manitoba First Nations could offer some kind of middle ground on the initiative. After all, what have they got to lose? Graduation rates are abysmal.

Manitoba's First Nation community is certainly in dire need of some good news. Improved graduation rates could really help raise spirits within the community. According to regional updates obtained by the Canadian Free Press through Access to Information legislation, well over half of First Nation children in Manitoba grow up in poverty and have the lowest graduation rates in Canada.

Those updates show that indeed Manitoba is the worst place for First Nations to live.

Education is certainly one ticket out of a life of poverty. First Nations in Manitoba should be lining up to support any meaningful reform to the dysfunctional on-reserve education system. Calvin Helin, a noted First Nation author from British Columbia, stated that for Aboriginal peoples as the education levels rise so does median income, just like any community. Education levels and median incomes are higher among Aboriginals living off reserve. Meaningful change to the First Nation education system would help bring those blessings to the on-reserve population as well.

Helin noted in his landmark book Dances with Dependency that educational attainment is indeed vital for the economic well-being of individuals and nations.

Thus, any plan to advance the First Nation community should include a comprehensive education strategy.

Manitoba First Nations would set a good example for other Indigenous communities in other provinces by supporting that strategy.

-- Joseph Quesnel is a policy analyst with the Frontier Centre for Public Policy. www.fcpp.org.

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegsun.com/2015/03/27/with-education-comes-opportunity

'Spirit Horse' sparks First Nations, Métis and Inuit studies in Windsor elementary schools



John Packman / Supplied

Roseneath Theatre's Timothy L. Hill, Dakota Hebert, Brianne Tucker and Alex Lamoureux.

OurWindsor.Ca

Spirit Horse, a powerful theatrical production that chronicles the adventures of two Aboriginal children who challenge cultural stereotypes and confront racism, is igniting imaginations and studies in First Nations, Métis and Inuit diversity, history and perspectives in local elementary schools.

Adapted by Ojibway playwright Drew Hayden Taylor, Spirit Horse is being performed for Grades 4-8 students this week by Roseneath Theatre, Ontario's largest professional touring company.

All performances are accompanied by online and face-to-face professional development/learning for public elementary teachers.

Organized by the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) with support from the Ontario Ministry of Education, the Spirit Horse tour will bring Aboriginal perspectives to elementary students and teachers at public and First Nations schools in 75 southern Ontario communities over ten weeks this spring. Endorsed by the Chiefs of Ontario, the initiative builds on the Ministry's Social Studies curriculum.

"Spirit Horse has proven to be a powerful learning experience about stereotyping and racism, one that offers an important message of hope for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and teachers," said Adelina Cecchin, President of Greater Essex ETFO Teacher Local.

Greater Essex ETFO Occasional Teacher Local President Sharon Ciebin added, "By understanding the systemic discrimination and barriers that First Nations, Métis and Inuit people face in Canada in the present and past, our youth will be better equipped to be part of the solution to these pressing problems."

Spirit Horse is a powerful play about the challenges faced by two Aboriginal children whose family is caught between the traditional ways and contemporary urban culture.

The Roseneath Theatre cast includes a musician and three actors who play over 65 characters.

ETFO has established a website at www.spirithorse.ca which features tour dates and locations, online professional development/learning, classroom resources and ways for students to post comments to the cast arising from the play.

The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario represents 76,000 elementary public school teachers and education professionals across the province and is the largest teacher federation in Canada.

Direct Link: http://www.ourwindsor.ca/news-story/5536333--spirit-horse-sparks-first-nations-m-tis-and-inuit-studies-in-windsor-elementary-schools/

Aboriginal Health

Pabineau First Nation fighting methamphetamine addictions

Drug first took hold five years ago, and the band is trying desperately to stop it

By Anthony Peter-Paul, for CBC News Posted: Mar 27, 2015 5:00 AM ET Last Updated: Mar 27, 2015 5:00 AM ET



One woman in her early thirties, scars running from the inside of her elbow and down her forearm from needle injections, sits on a mattress on the floor of a bedroom. (Anthony Peter-Paul)

A woman in her early thirties, scars running from the inside of her elbow and down her forearm from needle injections, sits on a mattress on the floor of a bedroom. Ashtrays filled with stubbed-out cigarettes are scattered across the room alongside partially empty cups and bottles of unrecognizable liquids.

She takes a medicine bottle with a peeled label and pours three methamphetamine pills on a plate.

"This is the real 'ice,'" she says, picking up two for closer examination. She uses a spoon to crush the ice on the plate, forming two lines per pill. She sniffs them within an hour.

‘Ice’ hits Pabineau First Nation hard

Pabineau First Nation is a small, northern New Brunswick community of 290 Mi’kmaq members. It has been flooded by this new drug that is challenging the band administration, police, and health experts.

Methamphetamine, in the form of speed pills, was introduced here about five years ago. Recently a stronger form of meth called ice hit the streets of Pabineau. Its popularity grew fast.



‘Ice’ in Pabineau sells for five dollars a hit. It usually comes in a small-white, rectangular-shaped pill with potencies that vary from mild to high. (Anthony Peter-Paul)

"People were not prepared for this new drug because the euphoric effect from its use is so powerful," says the woman, who asks for anonymity because she fears reprisals from her Pabineau drug dealers.

Ice in Pabineau sells for $5 a hit. It usually comes in a small white rectangular pill with potencies that vary from mild to high.

"A lot of people started using and selling ice on the reserve," she says. "Youth, 12-year-olds, were using, most everybody."

When ice hit the streets, "morals went out the window. Those on drugs were doing sexual favours to get their fix, they would steal from their own family; both female and male were prostituting themselves," she says.

Combating addiction in the community

In a desperate attempt to combat the drug, the chief and council hired a private investigator and ordered random drug testing of community employees. Those who tested positive for drugs were fired. Half of those fired tested positive for ice.

The Pabineau administration has not tested employed band members since last fall, but they are prepared to test again if their employees show signs of drug use on the job.

Patricia Roy has been a registered nurse for 45 years and has seen all kinds of addictions. This, she says, is different.

"What scares me about the drug is its power over normal life behaviours," says Roy. "It is one of the worse, potentially self-destructing abuse drugs known to society."

Roy has been the health director at the Pabineau Health Centre for ten years. She has organized drug and addiction information sessions, and established a partnership with New Brunswick's Addiction and Mental Health Services for appointment-based on-site counselling.

Since February, a medical specialist is available on a monthly basis at the centre "to provide a new approach to the control of mental health well-being with emphasis on general addiction control," says Roy. The centre will also "be privy to a physician who is known in other circles to treat mental health through the use of a holistic approach."

Since 2014, 15 people have asked for counselling. Only two have entered rehab.

"To fix a problem where the addiction is so severe it becomes a way of life, it's almost impossible to fix it from the outside. The person can only be helped if they want help," says Roy.

Back in the apartment, one woman's arms track the past. She has wrestled with cocaine, opiate and benzodiazepine addictions, but nothing compares to ice.

She is, in her own words, "tired of seeing skinny, grey-faced, and creepy pin-pointed eyes, walking around Pabineau looking possessed."

These days she keeps a Bible on the floor. It sits next to her torn mattress. She reads it daily, then turns over to face the devil, in the form of a little white pill.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/pabineau-first-nation-fighting-methamphetamine-addictions-1.2996959

How Brain-Damaging Mercury Puts Arctic Kids at Risk

Inuit children, exposed in the womb, have lower IQs because their mothers eat whale meat and other foods tainted with contaminants that drift north.



Inuit hunters at Rankin Inlet, in the Canadian territory of Nunavut, tow in a beluga whale, a delicacy in the Arctic. Belugas sit atop their food chain, so their tissues accumulate high levels of mercury and other contaminants.

Photograph by Paul Souders, Corbis

By **Lindsey Konkel**, for National Geographic

PUBLISHED March 27, 2015

In the frozen far north, in Arctic Quebec, the Inuit have relied on the same nutritious foods culled from the oceans for centuries: beluga whale, fish, seal, and walrus.

But some of these traditional foods have become so contaminated with brain-damaging mercury that the IQs of schoolchildren in remote Arctic villages are abnormally low.

Inuit kids with the highest exposures to mercury in the womb are four times more likely than less-exposed Inuit kids to have low IQs and require remedial education, according to new findings by a team of researchers in Canada and the United States. The children scored on average almost five points lower on IQ tests.

"This study adds to a wealth of evidence that mercury from seafood can damage brain development in children," said Philippe Grandjean, a Harvard University neuroscientist who co-authored landmark research on the effects of mercury on children in the North Atlantic's Faroe Islands.

Scientists have sparred for years over the risks and benefits of fish consumption for pregnant women and their fetuses. Fish and marine mammals are rich in omega-3 fatty acids, which benefit brain development, while mercury and other contaminants in seafood trigger health advisories for pregnant women in the United States and Canada.

In the latest study in Nunavik, the far northern part of Quebec, Inuit children had slightly higher mercury levels than most American children. However, the levels were similar to those found in some U.S. populations that eat a lot of fish, including New York City kids born to native Chinese mothers.



NG MAPS; ANDREW UMENTUM
SOURCE: INUIT TAPIRIIT KANATAMI

Worldwide, mercury in the oceans is on the rise, largely because of emissions from coal-fired power plants in Asia. Ocean and air currents pull mercury and other contaminants north, so they accumulate in Arctic wildlife and people.

The IQs of 282 Nunavik children, ranging in age from 8 to 14 years, were compared with the amounts of mercury in their umbilical cord blood in the study conducted by researchers at Laval University in Quebec and Wayne State University in Detroit.

The children from Nunavik, a vast territory larger than California with a population of only 12,000, traveled by plane from their remote villages to undergo the IQ testing. Some

questions on the tests, which originally were designed for American children, were changed to better reflect Inuit culture. In one test, for instance, researchers swapped out "volcano" for "avalanche."

The health of children in the villages has been studied by these Laval University researchers since the 1990s because of the children's high exposure to mercury and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), other contaminants that build up in marine foods. Previous research has suggested effects on attention disorders, motor skills, heart rates, and respiratory and ear infections.

Inuit daily intake of mercury in country foods
The Canadian government has set the tolerable daily intake of mercury at **0.20 micrograms per kilogram of body weight per day** for children and childbearing-age women, but studies show Inuit in northern Quebec have a mercury intake that is higher than recommended levels.

The meat of belugas—small, white whales with bulbous heads that inhabit icy waters off Canada and Greenland—is regarded as an Inuit delicacy and provides essential nutrients such as protein and iron. But belugas also are contaminated with exceptionally high levels of methylmercury. Eaten raw, frozen, or boiled, their meat contributes two-thirds of people's dietary mercury intake in some villages even though it is consumed far less frequently than the "country food" staples of caribou, geese, seal meat, walrus, and Arctic char.

"I feel terrible about the presence of contaminants that have made their way to my homeland of Nunavik. I feel particularly frustrated, because we have no industrial development in Nunavik," said Adamie Delisle Alaku, who lives in the Nunavik village of Kuujjuaq. He is an executive vice president of Makivik, a corporation that represents Nunavik's Inuit.

Measuring Inuit IQs

Nearly eight of every ten women of childbearing age in some Nunavik villages have blood mercury levels exceeding Canada's health guideline.

On the IQ tests, the children with the highest mercury levels in their cord blood scored, on average, 4.8 points lower than children with lower levels, according to the study, published in the journal *Environmental Health Perspectives* earlier this month. And kids with the highest levels were four times more likely to have an IQ below 80, the clinical cutoff for a learning disability.

"IQ is a really useful measure when thinking about toxicity of chemicals, because it's a general test of cognitive ability that incorporates a variety of different brain functions," said Bruce Lanphear, an epidemiologist at Simon Fraser University in British Columbia who was not involved in the Nunavik research.



Seal, like this harp seal, which contains mercury, but a lower concentration than beluga, is an important part of traditional diets in Nunavik and Nunavut, the Arctic regions of Canada.

In children it is difficult to distinguish a five-point difference in IQ. But such differences become more noticeable when looking across an entire population, Lanphear said. “For every IQ point lost, there is an estimated $15,000 [U.S.] reduction in lifetime earnings,” he said.

Scientists and regulators have debated for years over the link between lower IQs and mercury-tainted seafood.

Much of this controversy is fueled by the contradictory science: In three decades of research on the Faroe Islands, where pilot whale is a traditional food, children with high mercury exposure have scored substantially lower on tests measuring vocabulary, memory, and motor skills. On the other hand, tests of children in the Seychelles, in the Indian Ocean, found no association between mercury exposure from fish and the same measures of brain development.

Some researchers have speculated that high levels of fatty acids found in fish in the Seychelles could have masked the effects of mercury there. The Faroese, by comparison, were exposed to mercury through whale meat, which contains less omega-3.


Walrus is another traditional food of the Inuit in Nunavik and Nunavut.

Study co-author Sandra Jacobson said the new Arctic Canada findings shift the evidence in favor of the connection between seafood and reduced mental ability in children. The study is the first to link prenatal mercury exposure to poor performance on an IQ test for schoolchildren.

“One of the real values of our research is that it addresses some of those differences in a completely independent study population and helps to reduce the degree of controversy,” said Jacobson, a Wayne State University neuroscientist who has studied the effects of industrial chemicals on brain development for about 35 years.

The scientists reported that the effect on the children’s IQs may have been even stronger if it weren’t for all the brain-benefiting fatty acids in their marine diet.

More Stress for the Inuit

Contamination of traditional foods adds stress in a population already burdened heavily by poverty and food insecurity. Fewer young Inuit are learning to hunt and fish, while imported foods are unaffordable. Half of the children in a Nunavik survey lacked a sufficient quantity of food, and one-third had low levels of iron.

“It’s very hard under these circumstances to tell people they shouldn’t eat certain foods. That would put additional pressure on families dealing with so many other stressful social and economic situations on a daily basis,” said study co-author Gina Muckle, a Laval University psychologist who has studied the health of Nunavik children since the 1990s.

Health officials in recent years have provided pregnant women along the eastern Hudson Bay with free Arctic char—which is low in mercury contamination and high in fatty acids—to try to wean them off more contaminated beluga meat.

Besides providing nutrition, traditional foods like beluga and seal are a vital part of Inuit culture, from their art to their storytelling.

“Our lives, our cultures, and our very existence is inextricably linked to all the wildlife resources we harvest in the Arctic. Our continued reliance on these resources defines us as a unique people,” Alaku said.

There was some good news about the other major contaminant that has long haunted the Inuit. The researchers found no association between IQs and polychlorinated biphenyls in Nunavik—unlike previous studies of Great Lakes children whose mothers ate PCB-laden fish from Lake Michigan.



Health officials urge pregnant women in Nunavik to eat more Arctic char (shown here drying at an Inuit fishing camp), a fish that is less contaminated than beluga whale.

“Levels of PCBs have decreased over time. It’s probable that the Inuit children were exposed to a less neurotoxic mixture of chemicals than existed in the Great Lakes in the 1980s,” said Wayne State neuroscientist Joseph Jacobson, who co-authored the Nunavik and Lake Michigan studies with his wife, Sandra.

Based on the findings of children’s studies, U.S. officials advise pregnant and nursing women to avoid certain fish with high mercury levels—tilefish from the Gulf of Mexico, shark, swordfish, and king mackerel. They also are advised to limit white (albacore) tuna to six ounces a week.

Direct Link: http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/03/150327-inuit-mercury-beluga-iq-canada-nunavik-arctic-faroe-islands/

Métis in Fort Chipewyan plead for help with health costs

By Marty Klinkenberg, Edmonton Journal March 28, 2015



Fred “Jumbo” Fraser, president of the Métis Local in Fort Chipewyan, says the Metis in Fort Chipewyan need financial help to cover health care related travel to Fort McMurray and Edmonton.

Fred (Jumbo) Fraser, a spry fellow who looks younger than his 77 years, serves as president of the Métis local in the former fur trading post established at the edge of Lake Athabasca in 1788.

Sitting in his office in a trailer across from the community nursing station, he says he remembers when Fort Chipewyan was a Métis town. Now, the Métis population is dramatically outnumbered by members of the Mikisew Cree and Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations.

Unlike those native bands, whose treaty rights include health benefits from the federal government, Métis have to pay their own expenses when they travel to Fort McMurray and Edmonton for medical appointments.

“We are the original settlers here and we are the ones that don’t have any help,” Fraser says.

Until now, the native-operated Nunee Health Society has been covering the costs, but it has no funds specifically set aside for the Métis and handful of other residents in the community of 1,000 people who lack treaty status.

“They have been very good to us, but their funds are dwindling and that has left us in a bind,” Fraser said.

“Anywhere else in Alberta, you just go to the hospital and are taken care of. I don’t think there are too many places like Fort Chipewyan. We are off the beaten path up here.”

Officials with the Nunee Health Society have discussed the issue with the province in hope some money will be apportioned. Fraser said he is about to write to both the provincial and federal governments to plead for help.

“I don’t care who helps us, so long as somebody does,” he said. “With the exception of this, we can eke by. We are all hunters, trappers and workers.”

Fort Chipewyan, more than 700 kilometres northeast of Edmonton, is accessible in winter by an ice road, but the rest of the year can only be reached by air or boat. A round-trip flight to Fort McMurray, 280 kilometres to the south, costs Métis patients a minimum of $250 on top of a hotel room, taxis and other expenses.

“If we have to send people out and pay for it ourselves, we definitely don’t have funding for that,” Fraser says. “In some cases, you are looking at thousands of dollars.”

Esther Tailfeathers, the doctor that flies into Fort Chipewyan from southern Alberta one week a month, said the issue affects the health care of patients.

“A number of the Métis and other non-status people refuse to go because they know what the cost is and how difficult it is,” she said.

“I have had patients with cardiac issues beg not to be sent out. They want everything done here because the cost is so great when they leave.”

Direct Link:
http://www.edmontonjournal.com/M%C3%A9tis+Fort+Chipewyan+plead+help+with+health+costs/10926630/story.html

Trail-blazing aboriginal doctor worries Fort Chipewyan residents not ready for major lifestyle change

By Marty Klinkenberg, Edmonton Journal March 29, 2015

FORT CHIPEWYAN — A sign posted outside the medical clinic in Fort Chipewyan tells patients they may have to ring the buzzer to be let in. In winter, the front door freezes in the sub-arctic temperatures in one of Alberta’s most isolated aboriginal communities.

Once inside, patients stack their shoes near the entrance and wait to be seen by staff from the Nunee Health Society. In the waiting room, announcements advertise a Mooshum and Kokum grandparents’ pageant, a drum-making class for teens, and an effort to compile a database of missing and murdered family members.

It takes four hours in winter to drive from Fort McMurray to Fort Chipewyan on a devilish ice road. The rest of the year, the only way to reach the hamlet of 1,000 people more than 700 kilometres north of Edmonton is by air or a lengthy boat ride on the Athabasca River.

It is as remote as it is breathtaking and a challenging place to deliver health care.

There are two First Nations and a small population of Métis in the former fur-trading outpost established in 1788 by a predecessor of the North West Company. There is one full-service restaurant and two gas bars, one grocery store with exorbitantly high prices, and one doctor, Esther Tailfeathers.

She has flown into the community for three years, spending one week a month treating patients. She is a member of the Blood Tribe in southern Alberta and a family physician at its facilities in Standoff and Cardston.

She travels here because she believes it is her duty as one of 20 to 30 aboriginal MDs among the estimated 9,000 doctors practising in Alberta.

"The non-native communities in Alberta are gifted with other physicians, but there is a shortage in First Nations communities," Tailfeathers says. "I feel that it is important as an aboriginal person that I serve aboriginal people, whether it be on my own reserve or a different community.

"I really appreciate the stories of the people up here and the life they have led. It is almost overwhelming in terms of the time I spend with my patients. There is a lot of resilience and lots of stories about survival in really tough situations."

Between her visits, patients are seen by a nurse practitioner and a small team of nurses. Paramedics lend a hand when they can.

"They really should have a full-time doctor here," Tailfeathers says. "One week a month does not do justice to the community's needs. In that amount of time, it is really tough to take care of things that people really need taken care of.

"The big fear is that you are going to miss something and lose somebody."

She arrives most days at the Nunee nursing station by 8:30 a.m. She doesn't leave some days until 11 p.m. She handles everything from traumatic injuries to cancer screenings.

"When I think of Dr. Tailfeathers, the first words that come to mind are an absolutely wonderful lady,'" says Nicholas Gittins of Calgary, one of four clinical paramedics who work in rotating two-week shifts in Fort Chipewyan. "She is extremely caring and compassionate, and considerate of everyone she treats.

"I do believe the profession she has chosen is the right one for her."

Esther Tailfeathers was living in Norway with her then-husband, a Laplander she met in Australia at a world conference of indigenous people, when she learned her brother Darcy had died.

He was a role model on the Blood Indian Reserve, about 40 minutes south of Lethbridge and a short distance from the U.S. border.

He was an outstanding student and a standout hockey player for two years at Brigham Young University in Utah before deciding to become a doctor.

He was the first aboriginal admitted to the University of Alberta's medical school. He was a year from beginning his residency when the married father of three was killed in a car crash at age 25 in 1987.

"It was devastating for everyone," Esther Tailfeathers, 54, says. "I don't think our family has ever really recovered.

"As a result of his death, none of us siblings ever argue. We are all afraid we could say something in anger and then never have the chance to say we're sorry."

At the time of his death, he was talking about setting up a practice on the Blood reserve as soon as he became an MD.

"The family was very proud," says Rick Tailfeathers, Darcy's uncle and the communications officer for the Blood reserve. "He had worked hard to achieve his goals, and the degree he was pursuing was a first for our community.

He was truly blazing a trail."



A week before his death, Darcy called Esther.

She was living among the Sami people in Scandinavia and trading the cod and bluefish that she and her husband caught for reindeer meat.

"Darcy knew I had always been interested in going into medicine, and we talked about it the week before he passed away," Esther says. "He told me, 'It's tough going, but you should give it a try.'

‘If I can do it, you can.’”

She returned to North America and attended the University of North Dakota and the University of Alberta like her brother.

The mother of two grown children completed her residency at the Grey Nuns Hospital in Edmonton and set up offices in 2001 in Standoff and in the neighbouring native community of Browning, Mont.

She was the first aboriginal doctor to work at the Blood Tribe clinic since its founding in 1985. Her hiring was hailed with celebratory powwows.

“After Darcy died, Esther took the torch and ran with it,” Rick Tailfeathers says. “She came along and did the things Darcy almost achieved. She is a very resilient person, and very ambitious.”

The Tailfeathers clan are high achievers. Esther’s brother Jim is a dentist and her cousin Tim is a pharmacist. Another cousin, Lance, is head of the Blood Tribe’s Health Advisory Committee and two nephews are attending the U of A’s medical school.

Since 1989, the Faculty of Medicine and Dentistry has offered Darcy Tailfeathers Memorial Award in Medicine. At last count, 47 aboriginal students have received scholarships ranging from $1,000 to $1,700 a year as part of an indigenous health program that has graduated 86 aboriginal MDs.

“We wanted to do something to keep his name alive,” says Esther’s mother, Virginia Tailfeathers, 75.

The family’s medical legacy didn’t start with Darcy.

As a child, Esther accompanied her grandmother, Nellie, a community health nurse, as she made house calls along the gravel roads of the Blood reserve.

Virginia was an LPN who worked the overnight shift at the Blood Indian Hospital in Cardston, which closed in 1989 after 70 years.

“I’m not sure how she did it,” Esther says of her mom, who worked two jobs while raising six children. “She worked at the hospital all night and drove a school bus during the day.

“I don’t know when she slept.”

Now retired, Virginia says she and her husband, Lester, simply did what was necessary. Lester, a skilled carpenter, also painted houses, ran the school-bus company, coached minor hockey, served on the Blood Tribe band council, and raised cattle.

“I think my siblings and I must have got our motivation to succeed from our parents,” Esther says. “My mother led by example and my father drove us hard. He never accepted excuses.”

The Blood reserve is plagued now with 60-per-cent unemployment and an epidemic of alcohol abuse and drug addiction. More than a dozen residents have died in the past six months from overdoses of Fentanyl, a powerful painkiller being peddled as OxyContin.

“We are in the midst of a crisis in the community,” Tailfeathers says of her home reserve. “When I grew up, it was a much simpler time.

“You would think the quality of life would have got better, but that’s not the case. There is an almost obsessive hopelessness and a cascade of damage caused in residential schools is still hitting us.

“When I see some of the young children on the reserve now, it makes me sad. Life was never so bad for us.”

Compared to the Blood reserve, the conditions in Fort Chipewyan seem nearly idyllic. Unemployment is relatively low. There appears to be no significant problem with alcohol or drugs.

“The two communities I work in are very different but they probably started out very similar,” Tailfeathers says. “My reserve is surrounded by an urban environment, and the stress of colonization has existed in the south a lot longer than here.

“I think the remoteness and isolation in Fort Chipewyan has provided protection for the community because people have been able to maintain a traditional lifestyle because they had to. But there is going to be a big change, and it is not going to be healthy for them emotionally, spiritually or physically.

“The addictions and substance abuse is not bad in comparison to the south, but I fear it is going to be a challenge when people are not able to do the things they are happy doing. They are losing their culture.”

Tailfeathers says elders are depressed because they are unable to spend as much time in the bush as they once did. Two cancer clusters have been identified. Questions are being asked about the possible ramifications of being downstream from energy plants in the oilsands.

“The first year I came here, a lot of people were fishing and hunting, but over the last two years the number of people eating fish and wild game is really decreasing,” Tailfeathers says. “A number of elders have come in and said, ‘What’s the use of spending my time fishing if I can’t eat the fish?’ Or, ‘What is the use of going hunting if I can’t eat the meat?’

“They are fearful about drinking the water and eating the fish and moose. That drastically changes their lifestyle.”

Tailfeathers says the frequency of obesity and diabetes is increasing as people abandon their traditional diet and eat more store-bought food. The number of patients with autoimmune disorders is also rising.

“We did see a lot of deaths this last year secondary to cancer. People are coming in more often for a screening because it has become a fear in the community,” she says. “But we don’t know how or if that is linked to the changes in the environment.

“We really have no idea what the baseline is in terms of what is happening in the community.”

The X-ray machine at the Nunee nursing station is inoperable, the ambulance so small that a paramedic and a patient have difficulty squeezing into the back at the same time. There is no wheelchair lift at the airport, so gravely ill patients have to be hoisted into an aircraft by hand before they are flown to distant hospitals.

The fastest an air ambulance can fly to Fort Chipewyan from Fort McMurray is about 40 minutes. Getting to Edmonton takes more than two hours.

“The bottom line for me is client care,” says Caroline Adam, director of the non-profit Nunee Health Society since 2013.

“If any of these things was happening in any other community, there would be a huge outcry. These are services we should have access to as Albertans.

“Everyone has a right to health care.”

Rich Ibach, Alberta Health Services’ deputy medical director for the North Zone, says there are discussions about improving the standard of care in Fort Chipewyan. There are efforts underway to improve communication between the nursing station and staff at the Northern Lights Regional Health Centre in Fort McMurray. Technical enhancements will be made.

A recruitment campaign is also being customized to find candidates best able to meet the community’s needs, Ibach says.

“Working in that environment requires people who are especially good at what they do,” he says.

Staff at the Nunee health clinic is made up of a mixture of local natives and health care professionals lured by the challenge.



Nicholas Gittins worked at nursing stations in Fox Lake, Garden River and John d'Or Prairie, and rode in an air ambulance out of High Level before he accepted a position as a paramedic in Fort Chipewyan.

"We are essentially a jack-of-all-trades in the north," Gittins says. "Because of where we are, you do things you don't need to do anywhere else. Any emergency responses generally take an extended length of time.

"You have to pick up the patient, do assessments, provide whatever treatments you can within your scope of practice, call for Medevacs, and then wait for them.

"That time element can be very critical, particularly when you are dealing with the victims of heart attacks, strokes and multiple traumas.

"Time is tissue, both in the brain and heart."

Jessie St-Laurent spent five years in High Level before moving to Fort Chipewyan three years ago and accepting a job as the nurse in charge of the health clinic.

"The thing I like the best here is that we really get to know our clients," she says. "In a big city, you could see somebody once or twice and then not know what is happening. Here, it is different. We refer patients to specialists and they come back and you know of their condition has improved or is getting worse.

"There is a continuity of patient care."

The staff all admire Tailfeathers for her expertise, commitment and bedside manner.

"Dr. Tailfeathers always wants the best for her clients," St-Laurent says. "It doesn't matter if she knows there are 15 patients waiting. If she feels a patient needs more attention, she will take the time and make sure they feel better before they leave.

“She is really amazing.”

Tailfeathers stays in a house across the street from the nursing station that is provided for employees that fly in to work for the Nunee Health Society.

She muses over dinner about the desperate need for more caregivers in the isolated hamlet.

“Certainly the people that are here are doing a good job but they are going to burn out because there are so few of them,” she says.

“It is really difficult to keep nurses in the community and it is certainly hard to recruit physicians.

“Some of the rural communities that are able to attract doctors usually offer a signing bonus, housing and a number of other benefits, but there aren’t a lot of extra benefits in aboriginal communities. A lot of them barely have enough housing for their own people.

“Somehow, we have to get some help from outside.”

She dismisses the suggestion she is unusual as an aboriginal physician. Tailfeathers says more and more natives are entering medicine. Figures show, however, that less than one per cent of the estimated 9,000 doctors in Alberta are of aboriginal descent.

Instead, she wants to talk about her patients. She expresses angst over the recent drug-related deaths on the Blood reserve and concern over the hurdles residents of Fort Chipewyan face while trying to secure services available almost everywhere else.

She says some patients with serious health issues delay travelling to Fort McMurray or Edmonton for appointments with specialists until the ice road is open in December. Some travel for hours only to face frustration when they get to spend only a few minutes with a doctor. Others have language issues, and still more have difficulty coping with traffic and navigating their way through hospitals.

“Trips out are really difficult for patients. … There is a lot of stress and issues that people in Fort McMurray and Edmonton never think about.

“A lot of times, a Medevac fight will take people out of the community for admission to the hospital, but then they don’t have a ride back. Sometimes they are discharged and are stuck on the street.”

No matter how precarious their condition, some patients beg to be treated at the nursing station in Fort Chipewyan.

“Many elderly patients are fearful that if they leave it will be their last trip out,” Tailfeathers says. “They think they will never come home again.”

Direct Link:
http://www.edmontonjournal.com/Trail+blazing+aboriginal+doctor+worries+Fort+Chipewyan+residents+ready+major+lifestyle+change/10926621/story.html

Operation Blue Sky crowdsourcing ideas for aboriginal health care

TAMSYN BURGMANN

VANCOUVER — The Canadian Press

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A long and dark list materializes when tabulating the health problems plaguing First Nations communities across Canada: HIV and AIDS, tuberculosis, nutritional deficits, alcohol and drug dependency, suicide.

Some innovative thinkers say they believe a brilliant solution could cost as little as $25,000.

An accounting firm and new tech outfit have paired to try to inspire problem-solvers from around the world to generate cost-effective ideas that might prove to be the magic elixir for the health-care challenges facing First Nations.

MNP LLP has adopted a strategy that's also being used by Google as it tries to send a robot to the moon – combining crowdsourcing and cash incentives to find solutions.

"Everybody will say, 'Let's throw more money at this problem,'" said Clayton Norris, an executive with the Calgary-based MNP. "But that's not what we're saying here."

The firm is putting up just $25,000 as first prize, and two smaller prizes of $5,000, for the best ideas that will be judged by a panel of health experts and its own representative. The challenge is dubbed Operation Blue Sky.

First Nations health advisers say the avant-garde use of crowdsourcing, referring to the process of soliciting a multitude of micro-ideas using the expansive reach of 21st-century communications, is a first for aboriginal health care in Canada.

Finding an affordable way to address the many health problems faced by First Nations is a big ask, Norris admitted. But his firm was inspired to try something different by the online platform that's hosting the challenge.

The company, called HeroX, is a for-profit spinoff of the XPrize Foundation, which is running Google's higher-stakes $30-million (U.S.) competition urging teams to design a cheap lunar robot by the end of 2016.

"It's a bit of a leap of faith for us. Because, what can we do? We see firsthand the challenges in the community," Norris said. "Maybe if we can spur some change or find out about something really good that's happening in another region in Canada, or in a tribal organization in the U.S., or Australia or New Zealand.

"Maybe it's just a very basic idea that can benefit as many people as possible."

Norris said the competition stems from MNP's desire to give back to its clients – more than 150 First Nations across the country. The deadline for proposals is Aug. 12.

Anyone can submit a solution, although the firm is encouraging entries from aboriginal Canadians who already have some experience providing community health care. MNP funds the prize, while also paying a small percentage to HeroX.

Crowdsourcing solutions to the native health dilemma has potential to produce profound results, said HeroX vice-president Emily Fowler. She points to the invitation for aboriginal people to participate, rather than be merely subjected to another plan imposed from the outside.

"It's a matter of taking on something that could be seen as touchy, or debatable, or contentious. It's about saying, 'Let's put aside any of that, let's create something together by sourcing those ideas together.'" The MNP challenge has already been distributed to a network of 800 people via the First Nations Health Managers Association, said its executive director Marion Crowe.

Solutions could be as simple as designing a community garden combatting the higher instances of diabetes charted in native youth, she said.

"We don't have to invest a million dollars in telehealth technology," she said. "Crowd-sourcing hasn't been done in aboriginal health. Just doing this is innovation itself."

Chief Medical Officer Dr. Evan Adams, with B.C.'s First Nations Health Authority, urged "sophisticated" proposals showing a clear understanding of the complex issues.

"For us, it is very colonial when people say, 'Oh, you know what you Indians need to do? You need to eat your vegetables, so let me start up a program where we teach your kids,'" he said.

"A very evolved conversation would be. … We can work together. Rather than me coming in like a superhero, helicoptering in and telling all of you how to live your lives, let's decide together."

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/life/health-and-fitness/health/operation-blue-sky-crowdsourcing-ideas-for-aboriginal-health-care/article23711206/

Aboriginal History

Bronze to honour First Nations war hero

By Star Staff

Thursday, March 26, 2015 10:07:39 EDT PM


Francis Pegahmagabow

Roger Chum, president of the Ontario Native Education Counselling Association, is asking Canadians to help honour Francis Pegahmagabow, the most highly-decorated First Nations soldier of the Great War.

ONECA leads a committee dedicated to erecting the first life-sized bronze sculpture, created by Sudbury sculptor Tyler Fauvelle to honour the late Pegahmagabow, a native of Wasauksing First Nation who received a Military Medal and two silver bars for acts of valour under fire during the First World War.

The bronze will be installed at the Charles W. Stockey Centre for the Performing Arts in Parry Sound, and will be unveiled in June 2016.

Inspired by this initiative, the TV and video broadcasting program at Canadore College in North Bay is working with one of its First Nations students to produce a video about Pegahmagabow and military contributions made by Canada's first peoples.

The fundraising campaign kicked off this week.

"We've applied to the public sector for funding, and we need to raise $85,000 in matching funds," Chum said. "The Wasauksing First Nation (Parry Island) has taken the

lead, and pledged funds to honour one of its bravest sons. We want Canadians to hear Pegahmagabow's story, to remember him, and to learn more about aboriginal people's military service to Canada."

Roxane Manitowabi, executive director of ONECA, joined Chum to display some of the gifts which will be offered in thanks for donations at various levels.

"We've arranged for gifts which promote First Nations culture and heritage. For example, we have books, signed by their authors, about the historical and contemporary experiences of aboriginal people, as well as art prints and cards by First Nations artists," Manitowabi said. "I encourage people to go to www.oneca.com to read about the project, and to make a donation online, through PayPal."

"Our hope is that this monument will be spirit-building, and an inspiration to all, especially aboriginal youth," Chum added.

Pegahmagabow enlisted in 1914, and fought overseas for almost the entire war, seeing action in some of its most horrific battles: Second Battle of Ypres, the Somme (where he was wounded), Passchendaele, and the Battle of the Scarpe.

A superior scout and sniper, he was awarded the Military Medal in 1916, and later received two silver bars. Fewer than 40 Canadians have ever been awarded the Military Medal and two bars.

To this day, no Aboriginal soldier has ever received as many battle awards.

Pegahmagabow continued to fight when he came home, but this time the enemy was oppression and racism. Fuelled by pride in his Great War accomplishments, he persistently agitated for change.

He twice served as Chief of the Parry Island Band (Wasauksing First Nation), and as Supreme Chief of the Native Independent Government, an early aboriginal political organization.

Suffering from lung damage caused by chlorine gas during the war, Pegahmagabow died in 1952.

Donations can be made by cheque payable to Parry Island Hero, and sent to ONECA, P.O. Box 220, 37 A Reserve Road, Naughton, ON, P0M 2M0, or online (via PayPal) at www.oneca.com.

Direct Link: http://www.thesudburystar.com/2015/03/26/bronze-to-honour-first-nations-war-hero

Can crowd-sourcing help solve First Nations health care challenges?



A snowmobile rides down the main street Tuesday, December 18, 2012, on the Fort Hope First Nation, Ont. (Ryan Remiorz / THE CANADIAN PRESS)

Tamsyn Burgmann, The Canadian Press
Published Sunday, March 29, 2015 9:13AM EDT
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Direct Link: http://www.ctvnews.ca/health/can-crowd-sourcing-help-solve-first-nations-health-care-challenges-1.2302787

Aboriginal Identity & Representation

Ancient First Nations tradition returns

Jerold LeBlanc/Staff writer

Friday, March 27, 2015 9:32:36 MDT AM



Maskwacis elder Roy Louis is presented a work of art by Norwood School principal Jodie Mattia in appreciation of his help in bringing smudging back to the Wetaskiwin school. Louis lead the smudging, the first time it had taken place at the school since January.

An ancient First Nations tradition was welcomed back with open arms at Norwood School in Wetaskiwin.

A smudging ceremony, involving staff, students, elders, Wetaskiwin Mayor Bill Elliot and numerous members of the Wetaskiwin Regional Public Schools, was held March 20 at the elementary school.

“First of all, we need to acknowledge were on Treaty 6 land,” Mayor Elliot told all those in attendance. “So we’re actually on their land.

“But tomorrow is also the elimination of racial discrimination day. It’s an international day that was started in 1966.

“We need to work to be one community. I think that’s what we are doing today – we are all one.

“We are not you, you and you and me. We all work together; we include each other all the time, that’s what we’re doing today,” said Elliot.

Samson Cree elder Roy Louis, who conducted the smudging ceremony, spoke to the crowd gathered.

“For our people, it’s an honour to be here because this is a day of celebration.

“This is a very good day because it’s the first day of spring.

“The ceremony today was very important.

“We started a process doing ceremonies. There’s a ceremony for every moon that we have every month.

“I really want to thank the school board … this is important to all of us, the diversity in schools that we have right across the country, not just here in Alberta, but here in central Alberta,” said Louis. “As the mayor said, this is Treaty 6 territory. It’s important to all of us to know that. You’re on treaty land.”

Dr. Terry Pearson, WRPS superintendent, spoke about the division’s role in education.

“These are the people who were elected by your parents to run the school division.

“It goes from Alder Flats to Gwynne, the City of Wetaskiwin, Town of Millet, and they do the best to make sure that you have the programs and services that you need.

“The teachers that are here, the teacher assistants, and support staff, they try to provide you with the best services and programs,” said Pearson.

“We want you to have a good year. Norwood is a fantastic school with fantastic students with a wonderful staff.

“The board of trustees, a number of them are here today … are very proud of this school, very, very proud of all of our schools, very proud of our teachers, and most importantly, absolutely, very proud of each and every one of you,” said Pearson.

Deanna Specht, WRPS board chair, brought greetings on behalf of the organization.

“Norwood has always been to the front when we speak about our partners to the south.

“Our four bands and the relationship we have with the First Nations people, and the importance of trying to get First Nations teachings and curriculum in the school.

“Because it’s important for everybody to learn about our First Nations history, not just First Nations kids that we’re so proud to have here.”

Specht said the board celebrates diversity throughout the school division.

“(We) encourage everybody to share their diversity with each other because we are a multicultural society, and we need to celebrate everybody’s traditions.”

Direct Link: http://www.wetaskiwintimes.com/2015/03/27/ancient-first-nations-tradition-returns

Cree Big Plume hopes to heal and advocate for aboriginal community on journey to become Miss Universe Canada

By Anna Brooks Metro
March 29, 2015 | 5:40 pm

When Cree Big Plume, 24, was scouted for the Miss Universe Canada pageant in December, she admitted she was a little leery at first.

Big Plume, who grew up in Tsuu T’ina Nation southwest of Calgary, said even though aboriginal women have competed in beauty pageants before, it still seems to surprise many people.

“It’s such a culture shock and it shouldn’t be — it should be more than natural,” Big Plume said. “Your ethnicity shouldn’t matter. It’s your characteristics, experience and value people should worry about.”

Big Plume described her confusion during a past modelling shoot in California when two American girls asked “what she was.” She told them she was aboriginal, to which the girls responded, “Shouldn’t you be in a museum or something?”

Despite past experiences like this, Big Plume said the Miss Universe pageant is an important chance for her to be an advocate for her nation.

Big Plume said especially after the horrors of Canada’s residential-schools system, this is also an opportunity for her to speak out and help the healing process.

“My mother was in residential schools,” Big Plume said. “And my late grandfather didn’t go to school because his parents hid him away when all the aboriginal children were being collected. They’ve been through so much, and I want to support them in their mission to find that hope of healing.”

A youth herself, Big Plume said it’s important for her to be recognized not just as a role model for young women, but for all members of her community. On a mission to break

down stereotypes and misconceptions around aboriginal culture, Big Plume said she also wants to defeat the controversy: Are you aboriginal or Canadian?

“We don’t live in teepees or igloos,” Big Plume said. “This is why cultures need a voice — it’s not about your skin colour, it’s about your own personal self. People need to realize we’re all human beings. We all the breath the same air, walk on the same land and we’re all looking up at the same moon at night.”

Big Plume said with the support of her friends, family and Tsuu T’ina Nation, she is ready to vie for the Miss Universe Canada crown.

Preparing for the big competition running May 15-24 in Toronto, Big Plume is busy looking for sponsors, working on her health, and raising funds for Operation Smile, a non-profit organization that provides surgeries to repair facial deformities for marginalized people around the globe.

Direct Link: http://metronews.ca/news/calgary/1326202/cree-big-plume-hopes-to-heal-and-advocate-for-aboriginal-community-on-journey-to-become-miss-universe-canada/

Canada's subverted racism against Aboriginals

Featured / March 29, 2015

Written by Tristan Johnston

Ingrained racism needs to be addressed.



Cody Lecoy. “Resurgence.” Acrylic on canvas. 2′x4′.

Forgiveness for residential schools, disrespect of traditional lands and racism: These are a handful of the many issues facing aboriginal people in Canada today.

While we hear a lot about the racism issues in America, we don’t hear as much about the problems faced by aboriginal people in Canada.

“The problem with Canadian racism is that, because of the Canadian system’s covertness, all the attention is drawn to the American system, and Canada gets a pass as it were,” says Dr. Charles Quist-Adade, a sociology professor at Kwantlen Polytechnic University.

“Canadians tend to think that their racism is much better than the racism in the USA, but I think that is wrong,” he says. “Racism, no matter where, no matter how, no matter what its shape, is still racism, and at the end of the day, people are hurt.”

The covertness that Quist-Adade refers to is the fact that almost half of the aboriginal population live on reserves, according to Statistics Canada in 2011. It’s easy for us to believe that Canada is one of the best countries in the world in regards to social progress. In fact, the Social Progress Imperative has ranked Canada second in the world, just behind Iceland, for tolerance and inclusion.

According to the 2011 Census, there are about 1,400,685 aboriginal people in Canada, or 4.3 per cent of the population. In B.C., there are about 232,290, or 5.4 per cent of the population.

When considering statistics, aboriginal people are in a different situation, compared to the rest of Canadians. Fewer are educated, healthy or safe. Fourteen per cent are unemployed, their incarceration rate is 10 times higher than the national average, and their school dropout rate is 2.7 times greater than average.

Much of this is due to their isolation, away from services that many Canadians take for granted. According to StatsCan, only two per cent living in the Greater Vancouver area (not including Abbotsford) are self-identified aboriginal.

In 2011, only 17.2 per cent of aboriginal people were able to communicate in an aboriginal language.

While there have been many changes in the United States regarding black civil rights, Brandon Gabriel, an artist and educator with the Kwantlen First Nation, says that little has changed for aboriginal people in Canada.

“I think progress is really slow moving, and I think that anything that’s deemed progressive in this society has to come from the people,” he says. “I don’t think the government is going to be an agent of change. The government is more interested in keeping things the way they’ve always been, because they benefit from it. And that benefit really comes down to the land and its usage.”

Gabriel refers to the way aboriginal land is approached by the government. Generally, the idea of land belonging to First Nations people is meaningless, according to Gabriel, simply due to the way Canada was originally founded and colonized.

He says many of the attitudes and policies developed in Canada, regarding the separation of First Nations people from the rest of society, began in the early formation of the country.

He cites the Indian Act of Canada as one of the most important pieces of legislation still in power.

“Basically, the Indian Act of Canada has served as the Apartheid model which other countries have adopted as their own. It outlines what’s in it, [including] land proprietorship, which First Nations people don’t have, to this day, who are living on reserve. Taxation issues, as well as healthcare and education with fall in line with it.

Many of the problems experienced by Aboriginal people today stem from our early colonial history. Phil Fontaine, a former national chief of the Assembly of First Nations, argued in a letter to the United Nations in 2013 that what early European colonialists did to indigenous Canadians would be considered genocide. The UN drafted regulations regarding this in 1948 in response to the Holocaust. Canada signed these regulations in 1949, and it passed through the House of Commons in 1952.

In the 1800s, colonialists encouraged Aboriginals to integrate into their own culture, using residential schools. Aboriginal children were taken from their families, and brought to Christian boarding schools where they would be forbidden from speaking their native languages, and taught a different religion. Roughly 150,000 people passed through these schools, and about 3,000 people died in them, namely from physical abuse and lack of proper medical care.

Aboriginal people experience many stereotypes. There are misconceptions that they have special rights due to their heritage. Many Canadians mistakenly believe that they get many things for free.

“One of the big misconceptions is that the Indian Act of Canada has provided a citizen-plus policy towards aboriginal people, which it hasn’t,” says Gabriel. “We do not own the land that we live on, it’s held in trust by the Queen of England. We cannot buy or sell it. So therefore, the rest of the country is abiding by this fee-simple land ownership system, which has benefited greatly from it, whereas the First Nations people have not been able to tax their own lands or put money into taxation which helps raise infrastructure development.”

“The racism towards Aboriginals is horrendous,” says Quist-Adade. “Lack of proper housing, lack of proper health care, many of them are on the streets, many of them are deprived of their basic amenities. They have the highest incarceration rates as a percentage of the Canadian population . . . Canada has a form of racism and indeed we should not be gloating that our racism is better than the one in the USA. It should be tackled head-on.”

Direct Link: http://runnermag.ca/2015/03/canadas-subverted-racism-against-aboriginals/

Montreal church transformed into Inuit-language sanctuary

“We’re just doing something that we should have done before" — Bishop Barry Clarke

DAVID MURPHY, March 31, 2015 - 8:36 am



Annie Ittoshat, Montreal's first Inuk minister, presides over St. Paul's Anglican Church in the city's West Island with weekly Inuktitut services. (PHOTO BY DAVID MURPHY)



St. Paul's Anglican Church in Montreal's west Island sat unused for two years until the Bishop of Montreal turned it over to an Inuit congregation in early 2015. (PHOTO BY DAVID MURPHY)

Special to Nunatsiaq News

MONTREAL — Rev. Annie Ittoshat stops about every five minutes and gazes up at the cathedral ceiling of St. Paul’s Anglican Church in Montreal.

“I mean, just look at this,” Ittoshat says, craning her neck at the church’s stained glass windows and the massive cross overlooking the church’s sanctuary.

For the past three years, the church has been quietly collecting dust. In Lachine, attendance dwindled, with St. Paul's closing its doors in 2012.

But the Bishop of Montreal, Barry Clarke, who lived and preached there for more than a decade, was always reluctant to sell the largest church in Montreal's West Island.

"I never felt right selling the property," Bishop Clarke told *Nunatsiaq News*. "I thought there was another use for it."

There was. And a few months ago, he figured it out.

In late January, Bishop Clarke made history when he installed Ittoshat as priest of St. Paul's, making her the first Inuk Anglican minister in Montreal.

And in so doing, he effectively gave the church to Montreal's Inuit population.

"When I was a parish priest, what I discovered was there was a fairly large group of Inuit people in Montreal… not just those who would come for hospital care, but residents here as well," Clarke said.

"Here we had an opportunity to bring Annie Ittoshat in and to make some of those connections and provide some support," Clarke said.

The church is "specifically for Inuit," said Ittoshat, originally from Kuujjuarapik on Nunavik's Hudson Bay coast.

"I've heard time after time that patients going to Montreal for hospital reasons, they have said that there was a grandmother who wished there was services in Inuktitut," Ittoshat said.

Ittoshat's goal is to keep Inuktitut alive in the church.

She stands in front of a group of 11 churchgoers on a -20 C Sunday morning in late February. The congregants, mostly Inuit, mainly women, focus on Ittoshat as she steps to the pulpit and speaks confidently in Inuktitut.

Ittoshat starts singing a hymn from a booklet of sacred songs translated into syllabics.

But she's drowned out by one of her congregants who takes over the lead. The woman is animated and passionate; she sways back and forth, raises her hands to the sky and even gets down on her knees at one point.

This Sunday's sermon was about forgiveness and welcoming, Ittoshat later explained.

“Knowing our history — what our parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters who went to residential school, what they had to endure, what they went through,” Ittoshat said. “And certain things taken away from them.”

“I said… it’s your church. I don’t want you to feel like you’re under the table, but [that] you are welcome,” Ittoshat said.

Welcoming Inuit to the church hasn’t been the norm in Montreal until recently, Bishop Clarke said.

“I think we’re just doing something that we should have done before,” he said.

“In our case in Montreal, we’ve been challenged to recognized the need for a ministry for First Nations people. Particularly among Inuit and so we’re providing that resource with an Inuit priest,” Clarke said.

In Montreal, home to about 1,000 Inuit, hearing a familiar language in church is important.

Ittoshat says the church is a bridge for Inuit, a way to worship and express themselves in their native tongue.

And she’s met people who have really needed that bridge — from students and medical patients to those who work for Makivik and the Kativik School Board.

But Ittoshat’s services reach beyond St. Paul’s. She delivers holy communion at the downtown YMCA just off Atwater Street as well.

When you ask Ittoshat if this is a lifetime goal achieved — to make history in one of Canada’s largest cities — she laughs. The fact is, she didn’t know her calling until 2003.

“I never thought about it. It was through a dream. I don’t remember the dream but when I woke up I had butterflies in my stomach. I’d never felt it before,” Ittoshat said.

That feeling took Ittoshat to Pangnirtung for a three-year minister’s program, and then down to Toronto to Wycliffe College for a masters in divinity, where she was the first Inuk ever to complete the program.

Now she’s living in the rector’s house beside St. Paul’s with her son and adopted son — both named Peter.

And she’s been dubbed “the best preacher” by at least one of her congregants.

“We’ve been so wounded as a people,” said one woman, who wished to remain anonymous after attending the two-hour long service.

“Because of outside influences that came to dominate and have imposed on use […] children were taught by a non-Inuk, another culture.”

It’s clear Ittoshat has made a home for herself — and her Inuit faithful — in Montreal. And it’s a stunning one, at that.

Another five minutes pass. Our conversation lulls and Ittoshat lifts her head again, marveling at a different cross at the back of the church framed by symmetrical wooden buttresses.

“It’s gorgeous. Look at it!”

Ittoshat holds services every Sunday at 10 a.m. at St. Paul’s Anglican Church at 377 44 Ave. in Lachine.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674montreal_church_transformed_into_inuit-language_sanctuary/

Increased interest in Aboriginal languages

Hamilton Spectator, Mar 31, 2015

By Carmela Fragomeni

A growing interest in indigenous languages is giving Aboriginals hope, says Cayuga language teacher Joanne Longboat.

"It's very important to our identity," says Longboat, who teaches at the senior elementary, high school and post-secondary levels on the Six Nations reserve.

There have been 60 Cayuga and 30 Mohawk students in the Ogweho:weh Language Diploma program since its 2009 inception, she said. The two-year course at Six Nations Polytechnic is run in partnership with McMaster University.

Many graduates now teach in daycares or native immersion schools, Longboat explained during an Indigenous Languages Day celebration on Tuesday.

Rick Hill, co-ordinator of the Indigenous Knowledge Centre at the polytechnic, says the day celebrates the value of indigenous languages across Canada, bolsters excitement and inspires people to keep learning them.

"People are trying to recover their sense of identity and self-worth … It helps to make you feel grounded."

Taylor Leeal Gibson, an assistant researcher at the centre, said his native language is "the key to understanding my culture. It's important to carry on because that's how we understand our world."

The loss of Aboriginal languages is to a large extent blamed on racism — and on Aboriginal children being taken from their families and forced into residential schools where speaking native languages was forbidden. During the Sixties Scoop, which started in the 1960s and continued into the '80s, it was commonplace for child welfare agencies to remove Aboriginal children from their families.

Hill remembers his Mohawk grandmother and Tuscarora grandfather leaving the room to speak their native tongues so the family couldn't hear. "They said 'We don't want you to feel the sting of racism when others hear the language.'"

But Hill says there are now "a good 250 language learners at various levels" in the Six Nations population of about 28,000.

Longboat says there are fewer than 50 people still fluent in their native language, most of them over 80 years of age.

The Indigenous Languages Day was marked at Six Nations with the launch of an English and Cayuga children's book called Carrying it Forward: Traditional Knowledge through the Eyes of Young Hodinohso:ni Artists. It was funded by an Ontario Trillium Foundation grant and produced by children aged seven to 12 at a summer camp.

The children made the artwork and their own interpretations of four traditional stories.

Mohawk adult immersion student Artie Martin, 36, said learning the language has helped him learn about himself, his culture and its traditions and he is proud to speak it to his four children.

"It's a big part of our identity."

He likes to point out that in Mohawk, no words exist to express mean sentiments.

"It's made me aware of how to treat people. Everything is more peaceful, less stressful. Language did that for me," he says.

Fellow adult immersion student Rohahiyo Brant, 25, is a Western University graduate aspiring to be a lawyer. He believes learning the language is the most important way he can help his people.

"It's the absolute foundation of your culture."

Direct Link: http://www.thespec.com/news-story/5534951-increased-interest-in-aboriginal-languages/

Aboriginal Jobs & Labour

Scaffolding training for First Nations helps bridge employment gap

David Dyck / Alaska Highway News
March 31, 2015 08:56 AM



Dakota Yahey looks on as BCRCC instructor Darren Worms takes the group through the introduction to scaffolding. Photo By David Dyck

Industrial Scaffold Services in Fort St. John underwent a training program for First Nations from Treaty 8 to train locals from the community for employment.

“There’s a lot of employable people that are in Fort St. John that just don’t have the training,” said Trevor Schlesinger, business development manager for Industrial Scaffold Services.

In an attempt to change that, they partnered with the North East Native Advancing Society (NENAS), as well as the British Columbia Regional Council of Carpenters (BCRCC) to take the training program on the road.

From last Tuesday to Friday, members of Treaty 8 were selected to undergo an introduction to scaffolding, a course normally only available in the Lower Mainland.

“We brought the scaffolding apprenticeship program on the road,” said Schlesinger.

NENAS provided transportation, housing, tools and trainees, while BCRCC brought up Darren Worms, an instructor from Vancouver, to go over the basics. Industrial Scaffold Services hopes to gain more trained local staff in a tight labour market.

Scaffolding is an in-demand trade in the Peace.

“It’s a safety function that provides a safe working platform for other trades to do their work,” Schlesinger said. “Basically, they work on elevator platforms, they go up temporarily, the person does their work, and then the we take it down.”

“The Peace Region is a growth area for our union and its signatory contractors, such as Industrial Scaffold Services Ltd.,” said Mark Derton, president of the BCRCC, who was also in town for the event.

“There is an immediate and future need for more scaffolders in the area as the local economy continues to grow and more of the workforce moves towards retirement age.”

- See more at: http://www.alaskahighwaynews.ca/fort-st-john/scaffolding-training-for-first-nations-helps-bridge-employment-gap-1.1809345#sthash.EbtioFQ6.dpuf

Aboriginal Politics

Top-Down Decisions About B.C. First Nations Aren't Going To Work

Posted: 03/27/2015 1:35 am EDT Updated: 03/27/2015 1:59 am EDT

Late last week, the provincial government decided to unceremoniously dump former B.C. Liberal cabinet minister George Abbott as the incoming First Nations treaty commissioner.

My thinking was that Mr. Abbott was a good choice. He served twice as the minister of aboriginal relations and reconciliation (MARR) and had the support of First Nations leadership and the federal government. But just a few days before he was supposed to begin his new role, Minister John Rustad, current MARR, who recruited Abbott, contacted him to say he was unable to get the necessary support from cabinet for the appointment.

I am a member of Tsartlip First Nation and while we are participants in the B.C. treaty process, I have been critical about many aspects of it. I am concerned about the millions of dollars spent by the government to negotiate with willing First Nations and the millions of dollars borrowed by First Nations to negotiate with the government.

With only a handful of treaties signed in two decades, I have always had fundamental questions about the value of the program.

There is no doubt that times have changed and we need a new working model for provincial/First Nations relationships. First Nations peoples are mobilizing as we have seen in the Idle No More movement and the more recent Enbridge and Trans Mountain protests.

Last summer, the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in a landmark decision that the Tsilhqot'in have title over their territory. This development has created more uncertainty than ever and it has never been a more important time in British Columbia's history to rethink how we can work together.

Minister John Rustad had it right when he stated in question period:

We said last September in the all chiefs meeting that we wanted to find a new path. We wanted to look at new ways to work with First Nations. We were at a signpost in the road, and we had a choice as to the path that we could take.

Over the last number of months we've been thinking about our relationships with Nations, how we can work with First Nations differently. We've come to the realization that the B.C. treaty process has been very successful for the Nations that have made it through, but we need to be thinking about how we can revitalize it, how we can move forward.

We plan to engage with the principals around those discussions, with the First Nations Summit and with the federal government, to talk about what we can do, with treaty, to revitalize it. It's an important discussion. It's critical for the future with First Nations as well as for the Crown. It's an important discussion to go through that is unfettered and to be able to come up with the right path forward.

If it's time to do things differently, I suggest that making decisions behind the closed doors of cabinet and blind-siding your colleagues, the First Nations Summit and Mr. Abbott is not a very good way to start. In fact, there is nothing different about that approach at all. Government has been unilaterally and arbitrarily making decisions about First Nations since the relationship began in the 19th century.

Making the announcement with few details and then being unavailable for questions is not acceptable. First Nations are in the middle of negotiations and have a lot at stake here. Do they not have the right to know what you are up to? And what about the rest of the province?

The provincial government owes it to all British Columbians who have invested 22 years and over $600 million in the treaty process to be open and transparent about your in-camera decisions.

Minister Rustad: if you have hatched a new plan, we want to know about it. You just reneged on your previous plans with Abbott at the last minute, so how can we depend on your decisions? We can't. We have a trust issue here.

New government plans need to be the outcome of a collaborative planning process in which First Nations have played an integral part. Anything less, Minister Rustad, is completely unacceptable.

It is time for government to get a handle on this mess. The fundamental issue in B.C. is land title, as we learned last summer with the Supreme Court's Tsilhqot'in decision. Title issues will not be solved by signing business deals and partnership ventures alone.

Minister Rustad, the "new and different" direction you are claiming your government is on, is not new at all. Your announcement is paramount to blatant disregard for First Nations and frankly, that is as old as it gets. We are all tired of that approach. Do you really think that top-down decisions about First Nations is going to work? Because if you do, you are badly misguided. A new approach must start with collaboration.

What is really disappointing here is that George Abbott was willing to take a collaborative approach and First Nations were ready and willing to work with him. Perhaps what we are really witnessing is not a plan but rather chaos and a government in a tailspin.

Let me suggest, Minister, that there are many qualified, thoughtful, experienced First Nations leaders in this province who could help you figure this one out.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.ca/adam-olsen/george-abbott-john-rustad-first-nations_b_6941274.html?

Government surveillance old hat for First Nations

By Doug Cuthand, The Starphoenix March 27, 2015

Ryerson professor and First Nations activist Pam Palmater was being interviewed last week on the CTV program Question Period about the inherent dangers of Bill C-51 and its incursion into Canadians' privacy when she mentioned, as a matter of course, that she was being followed and monitored by the government.

The program's host Robert Fife was left slack-jawed and the remaining few minutes were spent following up on her statement. Palmater said she had sent freedom of information requests to the RCMP, CSIS and the departments of Aboriginal Affairs and Defence to determine if they were conducting surveillance on her. Three of the departments replied that they did, in fact, have her under surveillance.

While her statement might come as a surprise to an outsider, First Nations people have been under surveillance for years. In fact, most of us wear it as a badge of honour.

It would have surprised me if the government wasn't spying on Palmater. The government - and the colonial office in particular - has a long history of spying on First Nations people and their sympathizers.

Palmater is head of the Centre for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson. She has a master's degree in law and a PhD in the science of law. She is the kind of person the government and the colonial office fear. Of course they will place her under surveillance.

Another educated and outspoken woman, Cindy Blackstock, is the executive director of the Canadian Family Child and Caring Society. She discovered that she was routinely spied on by the department of Aboriginal Affairs and other government agencies. They scoured her Facebook page to get information on Blackstock and her friends and also accessed her personal files and followed her movements.

So why the surveillance?

Blackstock had the gall to question the government's parsimonious funding of First Nations child welfare and took the government to the Human Rights Tribunal, alleging that federal funding to aboriginal programming was discriminatory because it was 25 per cent to 30 per cent below comparable provincial programs. When she wins - and she will - Ottawa will have to increase funding to numerous First Nations programs, including education, social services and health care.

Indian Affairs has a long history of spying on First Nations leaders and activists. When my brother-in-law applied to join the RCMP, he was shown some examples of my writing and asked if he agreed with me.

Back in the late 1960s and '70s, when First Nations were actively organizing, the colonial office was going crazy trying to control things. Its word had been law for years and now there was a group of upstarts challenging the old ways of doing things. Surveillance increased and a lot of public money was wasted spying on Indians.

But it was when the Harper government came to power in 2006 that things really ramped up. Mohawk policy analyst Russell Diabo obtained documents from the RCMP and Indian Affairs that showed the federal government had increased surveillance of First Nations to monitor political action and protests related to land claims.

According to the documents, Aboriginal Affairs had the lead role in monitoring First Nations. A "hotspot reporting system" was developed to identify locations where there had been unrest and demonstrations. Weekly reports and updates highlighted First Nations that engaged in "direct action" to protect their lands and resources.

A document dated March 30, 2007, stated that the vast majority of "hot spots" were related to lands and resources. These are clearly the areas of the most conflict between First Nations and other governments at the time. The stage has shifted now to the chronic underfunding and Ottawa's failure to recognize treaty and aboriginal rights.

The document also points out that the government will not work with "splinter groups, but only with duly elected leaders." This sounds fine on the surface, but in reality the Harper government has failed to recognize First Nations' leaders and attacked them through the Transparency Act and colonial legislation such as the First Nations Elections Act.

At a time when we should be achieving greater independence, the government is implementing a 50-yearold colonial agenda. The colonial office is alive and well and thriving under this government. As John Ralston Saul has pointed out, the department is run with the mentality of a Victorian poorhouse.

No other group in Canada is administered by a federal agency that fears the very people it's supposed to serve.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Government+surveillance+First+Nations/10924532/story.html

First Nations groups and others to protest Bill C-51

Posted on 3/28/2015 4:43:00 AM by Ted Raymond

Hundreds are expected on Parliament Hill Saturday to protest the Conservative government's anti-terrorism legislation, Bill C-51.

The protest called "Not Terrorists: Idle No More Ontario" promises a diverse list of speakers from First Nations, as well as groups such as Amnesty International, and speakers from the NDP and Green Party.

A Facebook post by the group lists over 500 people who say they will attend.

The group says "Caring for and protecting the world around us is not terrorism."

The protest will take place on the Hill from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Saturday.

On Friday, it was announced the Conservative government will amend its anti-terrorism bill to make it clear that its new information-sharing provisions would not target protesters who act outside the letter of the law.

When it was proposed the bill would have permitted much broader sharing of federally held information about activity that "undermines the security of Canada."

The proposed legislation already says such activity does not include lawful advocacy, protest, dissent and artistic expression.

The word "lawful" will be dropped following concerns the provision could be used to go beyond genuine security threats to ensnare those who hold peaceful demonstrations without an official permit or despite a court order.

With files from The Canadian Press.

Direct Link: http://www.cfra.com/news/2015/03/28/first-nations-groups-and-others-to-protest-bill-c-51

Smyth: Fears over First Nations relations as premier looks set to can commission

By MICHAEL SMYTH, The Province March 29, 2015



From left, Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs, Grand Chief Edward John and Premier Christy Clark at a meeting of cabinet ministers and First Nations leaders in September 2014. ‘The process isn’t working because the governments aren’t interested in making it work,’ said John about B.C.’s Treaty Commission.

It started out as an apparent case of petty political revenge by Premier Christy Clark against a former rival who ran against her for the Liberal Party leadership.

But Clark threw everyone for a loop last week when she revealed the real reason for cancelling George Abbott's appointment as the new head of the B.C. Treaty Commission.

It wasn't because Abbott accused her leadership campaign of "outright fraud" for signing up a cat as a Liberal member back in 2011. It wasn't because he said she had a "Kama Sutra" of flip-flopping on policy positions.

No, Clark wasn't just throwing her old cabinet rival under the bus. The entire Treaty Commission itself is in trouble.

"What the decision has been is not to invest more in the status quo — and that means to not appoint a new chief treaty commissioner," Clark revealed, taking aim at the commission's feeble record of achievement.

The B.C. Treaty Commission was set up 23 years ago to oversee treaty negotiations between First Nations on one side and the federal and provincial governments on the other.

The reason? Almost all of B.C. is the subject of unresolved native land claims. And, unlike other parts of Canada, very little of the province's land base is covered by historic treaties signed between governments and First Nations.

The idea was to negotiate "fair and durable" modern-day treaties to achieve certainty over the land — something that would benefit everyone, help the economy and avoid expensive land-claims lawsuits.

But progress has been agonizingly slow. In that 23-year period, there have been just four finalized treaties signed and ratified.

The cost has been enormous. The Treaty Commission has allocated $627 million in "negotiation support funding" to about 50 First Nations, mostly in the form of federal loans.

To Clark, the results have not been good enough.

"The status quo is not working," she said, indicating the commission might be shut down.

"We need to find a different way of doing it."

All of this came as a shock to Abbott, who was offered the job of chief treaty commissioner by Clark's government last fall.

It was an appointment supported by the federal government and the B.C. First Nations Summit, the other two official treaty-commission partners.

“I’m surprised and disappointed,” Abbott said. “I just don’t know where we’re going and that troubles me.”

Abbott said negotiating treaties is the only way to correct the wrongs of the past.

“Treaty is currently the only way for First Nations to move beyond the Indian Act of 1867,” he said. “British Columbia and Canada have responsibility to move beyond an absolutely archaic mistreatment of indigenous people in this province.”

Clark says she agrees with that. But what’s the point of continuing with a Treaty Commission that has produced just four agreements in nearly a quarter-century?

“First Nations have sat outside economic development for way too long already,” she said.

The government points to 250 economic agreements with First Nations that have been achieved outside the treaty process. The agreements typically involve economic projects in traditional aboriginal territories, creating wealth and jobs.

The government wants more of those type of tangible results, not eternal treaty talks.

“We want to see this happen, but we want to see it in our lifetimes,” said Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Rustad.

“We can’t wait for future generations. We have to find a way to get these benefits today.”

Rustad revealed that he has sent letters to the federal government and the First Nations Summit, asking them to “have a conversation” on how to reform the Treaty Commission.

But the head of the First Nations Summit thinks the two levels of government are the ones to blame for the problems.

“The process isn’t working because the governments aren’t interested in making it work,” said Grand Chief Edward John.

John said government treaty negotiators have refused to offer compensation to First Nations for native lands taken away in the 1800s. He said governments have also argued that some aboriginal rights and land titles have been “extinguished” over time and the feds have been stingy with fishing rights.

“There is no good faith on the part of governments,” John said. “They should invest in some mirrors and look at themselves if they really want to determine why the pace has been so slow.”

The outgoing chief treaty commissioner, Sophie Pierre, also had tough words.

“We seem to be going backwards to a dark time when B.C. questioned the need to engage in treaty negotiations at all,” said Pierre.

The remaining treaty commissioners, meanwhile, have appointed one of their own — aboriginal lawyer Celeste Haldane — to serve as “acting” chief commissioner once Pierre steps down next week.

As for Abbott, he said the sudden cancellation of his new job left him out of pocket. He had already rented an apartment in Vancouver, for one thing.

“But I’m not going to sue the government or anything,” he said. “I’m much more worried about the future of relations with the First Nations.”

Direct Link:
http://www.theprovince.com/life/Smyth+Fears+over+First+Nations+relations+premier+looks+commission/10926642/story.html

AFN chief Perry Bellegarde on closing the gap

The head of the Assembly of First Nations speaks to Julie Smyth of Maclean’s

Julie Smyth

March 28, 2015



Assembly of First Nations chief Perry Bellegarde was elected to his role in December 2014 and represents more than 600 First Nations.

The politician and activist is the former Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and Saskatchewan Regional Chief for the AFN. He was at the Broadbent Institute's Progress Summit on a panel looking at "Canada's relationship with Indigenous People: Can the Damage be Repaired?"

He spoke to *Maclean's* about where he sees opportunity to gain ground before the fall election, his discussions with all of the federal and provincial leaders during the past three months, and the shame around the disparity of wealth in the country and how to close the gap.

"If people in Canada can't get their heads around treaty rights or inherent rights or Aboriginal rights, then just get your head around the business case," he told us. "There's a high social cost of that exists. So let's put our minds and heads and hearts together to develop strategies and policies and legislation to help close the gap."

Direct Link: http://www.macleans.ca/news/canada/progress-summit-2015-afn-chief-perry-bellegarde-on-closing-the-gap/

Nunavik declaration commits to Inuit culture, self-governance

"We have embarked on a journey to recapture our strength as people"

NUNATSIAQ NEWS, March 30, 2015 - 9:01 am



Regional representatives of Makivik Corp. and other Nunavik organizations voted March 26 to adopt the 2015 Nunavik declaration. (PHOTO COURTESY OF MAKIVIK)



Quebec's Aboriginal affairs minister Geoff Kelley, seen here on the stairs of the Kuujjuaq Forum, left Quebec City after the March 26 release of the Quebec 2015-16 budget so he could meet with delegates to the Makivik Corp. AGM March 27. (PHOTO BY JANE GEORGE)

Nunavimmiut are a strong, united and determined people, says a new declaration adopted by regional leaders March 26.

And they're determined to promote and protect their Inuit language and culture and work towards more autonomy.

The declaration, drafted and adopted at Makivik Corp.'s annual general meeting held this past week in Kuujjuaq, aims to set in motion a regional blueprint or vision for the region, crafted through the Parnasimautik consultations of 2013 and subsequent report.

"With the adoption of this declaration, we have clearly stated our commitment to protect our culture and language, improve our socio-economic situation and work towards a new governance structure," said Makivik president Jobie Tukkiapik in a March 27 release.

While it's been just four years since Nunavimmiut voted against a proposed new government model in a 2011 region-wide reference, Nunavik's leadership wants the issue of self-governance back on the table.

Makivik is mandated to develop a strategy to negotiate with both the federal and provincial governments on behalf of Nunavik Inuit.

In drafting a declaration, the Nunavik of Inuit "have embarked on a journey to recapture our strength as people," says the document.

It further commits the region to:

• secure an expanded and adequate land base for our wildlife harvesting activities and the development of our communities;

• support industrial development in the region only when it is sustainable and equitable towards Nunavimmiut, and respects all environmental and social protection regimes under our land claims agreements and other laws;

• pursue a connection to Quebec's power grid and new forms of energy production, transportation and telecommunications;

• review the management of the region's public housing and work towards eliminating Nunavik's severe housing shortage;

• invest heavily in education "to reinforce the capacity of Nunavik Inuit;" and,

• develop more and better justice and social services adapted to the realities of Nunavik Inuit.

The Quebec government has yet to formally acknowledge or respond to the delivery of the final Parnasimautik report, which outlines the same priorities and commitments.

To speak with Makivik AGM delegates handful of Quebec ministers, including the province's minister of Aboriginal affairs, Geoff Kelley, attended the gathering in Kuujjuaq on March 27.

"This meeting allowed us to better understand the concerns and needs of Inuit communities," Kelley said in a March 27 release from the Quebec government.

"We consider it a matter of vital importance for the government and the Inuit to work together for the benefit of each and every resident of Nunavik villages."

Among the issues raised during those discussions at the AGM in Kuujjuaq: the social and economic development priorities, Plan Nord and the Parnasimautik.

"There is still much to be done to improve the quality of life of the Inuit and stimulate the local economy, but I am convinced that by working collaboratively, we will find solutions to the challenges they face," Boucher said in the release.

The Quebec politicians and the AGM delegates also watched an excerpt from a new documentary, produced by Makivik, on the James Bay and Northern Quebec Agreement.

Direct Link:
http://www.nunatsiaqonline.ca/stories/article/65674nunavik_declaration_commits_to_inuit_culture_self-governance/

Kwanlin Dun drummers interrupt premier at S-6 hearings

Premier and First Nations groups speak to parliamentary committee

CBC News Posted: Mar 30, 2015 3:19 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 31, 2015 8:21 AM CT



The parliamentary committee studying Bill S-6 got off to an unexpected start this morning when Kwanlin Dun drummers interrupted Premier Darrell Pasloski's opening statements with a welcome song.

Committee chair Blake Richards tried to stop the drummers, but they responded by explaining that this is their traditional territory. People in the room stood to recognize the drummers and applauded.

The committee then heard from the Yukon government and Yukon First Nations on Bill S-6, which proposes amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act (YESAA).

Pasloski spoke first, repeating his message that S-6 will be good for the Yukon's economy and will improve environmental outcomes.

The premier said Yukon First Nations have modern treaties that have taken years to establish and noted that YESAA is federal legislation, but he did offer an olive branch by suggesting a bilateral accord with First Nations and the Yukon government to resolve the outstanding issues.



Yukon MP Ryan Leef speaks with a member of the public at the Bill S-6 standing committee hearing in Whitehorse on Monday morning. (Mike Rudyk/CBC)

Yukon First Nations reacted positively to that suggestion, although they noted that consultation has not been adequate and they used words like: "lack of trust," "frustration," and "breach of the honour of the crown" during their speeches.

The First Nations and the premier were questioned by Liberal and NDP members of Parliament, as well as by Yukon Conservative MP Ryan Leef.

The First Nations told the committee YESAA is "no ordinary piece of legislation" and that it can't be changed like other federal laws.

Chief Doris Bill of Kwanlin Dun First Nation summed up much of the First Nations' previous submissions when she said: "We will not allow this to proceed."

The Yukon Chamber of Mines, Klondike Placer Miners' Association and the Yukon Environment and Socio-Economic Assessment Board will speak to the committee Monday afternoon.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/kwanlin-dun-drummers-interrupt-premier-at-s-6-hearings-1.3015226

Withdraw anti-terror bill: AFN chief

'We could be targeted as terrorists', Bellegarde says

By Jason Warick, The Starphoenix March 30, 2015



Assembly of First Nations Chief Perry Bellegarde worries native people could be unjustly targeted with the new law.

The proposed changes to federal anti-terrorism laws are a good start, but the head of the Assembly of First Nations worries Native people could still be unjustly targeted.

First Nations people will not hesitate to protest and march when necessary, even though the proposed Bill C-51 could see them branded as terrorists, AFN Chief Perry Bellegarde said.

"We assemble to stand up for our rights. We have a right to march and rally," Bellegarde said in an interview this weekend. Criticism has come from a host of aboriginal, environmental and legal organizations.

They fear the proposed bill gives spy and police agencies far too much power. They worry peaceful protests or other activism could result in increased monitoring or persecution.

"We could be targeted as terrorists," Bellegarde said, echoing his comments last month to a House of Commons committee.

Government officials say the new law is necessary to combat the growing terrorist threat.

Following the national uproar, they said late last week they'd be considering amendments. The news was welcomed by Bellegarde, but he'd like to see it withdrawn completely.

Bellegarde, a former councillor for the Little Black Bear First Nation and Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations chief, was in Saskatoon for an antiracism event Saturday.

He wants to take every chance he can to educate Canadians about the colonial past and the damage it has done.

He listed residential schools, the restrictions on First Nations farmers selling their produce and other injustices that have cast a long shadow into the present.

The unfair treatment continues, as the United Nations has consistently ranked Canada near the top of quality of life measurements, but Canada's First Nations people languish in 73rd place, he said.

That means First Nations have to stand up for their rights in a variety of ways. That could mean nation-tonation negotiation, legal action, or protest, he said. No Canadian laws can limit this right, he said.

In addition to the content of the bill, First Nations were not consulted at all before it was introduced. That flies in the face of the Constitution Act of 1982 and other legal precedents outlining aboriginal rights and the "duty to consult," Bellegarde said.

"There was no consultation. There was no accommodation. That didn't happen. Withdraw it," Bellegarde said. "This whole bill is flawed."

According to reports, the proposed amendments will be debated and voted on by a committee Tuesday. The Opposition parties have suggested far more extensive changes to the bill than those proposed.

Direct Link:
http://www.thestarphoenix.com/life/Withdraw+anti+terror+bill+chief/10930970/story.html

Canada needs to work with Inuit to bolster its sovereignty claims in the Arctic, say experts


ITK president Terry Audla, pictured at the Taste of the Arctic event in 2014.

By SENATOR ART EGGLETON |
Published: Tuesday, 03/31/2015 12:00 am EDT

If Canada is going to achieve its territorial aims in the Arctic it needs to treat the Inuit population as partners, rather than using only their existence to bolster Canadian sovereignty claims. This was the message from a panel of experts who appeared before the Senate Liberal Open Caucus on Wednesday March 25 to discuss the issues facing the Arctic.

Rapid warming in the Arctic has led to the increased potential of tapping the vast natural resources that are said to lie below the seabed. The five arctic coastal states (Canada, Russia, Denmark, Norway and the United States) are making territorial claims for these areas to the Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf through a process established by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

However, as Robin Campbell of Hutchins Legal pointed out, none of this process looks at the rights of the Inuit people in the Arctic. Campbell noted that the Inuit Circumpolar Council, an NGO representing approximately 150,000 Inuit from Alaska, Canada, Greenland, and Chukotka (Russia) has enjoyed a great deal of support from Canada in the past, but are now being largely excluded in discussions about key Arctic issues. “Canada seems to be taking the tact that, this is an external matter, this is between us and other states, Inuit have no role to play and we’ll talk with Inuit once this is dealt with, if we talk to them at all,” she said.

Peter Hutchins, also of Hutchins Legal, noted that the ironic part in all this is that the presence of the Inuit in the Arctic is the best chance Canada has at achieving its objectives. However, this can only be achieved by respecting the spirit of the treaties which Canada and the Inuit have signed in the past, and this is not happening. “Canada says we now have full sovereignty and that’s it,” Hutchins stated, “but the transaction

was quid pro quo. It was in return for something, and frankly if Canada does not honour its obligations, the Inuit are entitled to say the deal's off."

Furthermore, as the physical conditions in the Arctic under which these treaties were signed rapidly change (receding winter sea ice for example) the Inuit have the option of becoming free agents. "There is nothing to stop the Inuit from talking to the other coastal Arctic states and saying 'Let's work together,'" Hutchins said. "They are not our Inuit, they are Inuit."

Terry Audla, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, noted that for their part, the Inuit are more than willing to act with Canada in good faith. "Our arms are wide open; we've always been extending out to Canada to say we are here to work with you to shore up your Arctic sovereignty claims, give us a call anytime," he said.

The Senate Liberal Caucus will meet on April 1st to discuss how to get young Canadians more involved in politics at the federal level.

Liberal Senator Art Eggleton represents the province of Ontario and chairs the Liberal Senate Open Caucus meetings.

Direct Link: http://www.hilltimes.com/opinion-piece/2015/03/31/canada-needs-to-work-with-inuit-to-bolster-its-sovereignty-claims-in-the-arctic/41606

Métis Nation of Saskatchewan shuts its doors in Saskatoon

Internal dispute, money troubles force closure of headquarters

CBC News Posted: Mar 31, 2015 2:33 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 31, 2015 2:33 PM CT



The Metis Nation of Saskatchewan shut down its headquarters in Saskatoon.

The Métis Nation of Saskatchewan is shutting its headquarters in Saskatoon and laying off its last three staff members.

It has run out of money, still mired in an internal dispute over governance.

The organization has only held one legislative assembly in the past two years, instead of the two per year it's required to hold.

Federal funding has been frozen since October 2014 over the issue.

Brian Favel was the harvesting co-ordinator. It was his job to help ensure that Métis people could exercise their right to hunt for food.

Ancestry records at the Métis Nation office are used to allow individuals to exercise their rights as Métis people.

"People who are getting charged have nowhere to turn at this time," Favel said. "So basically I don't know what they're going to do, where they're going to phone. You know it's basically through the local presidents now that they have to work."

To Darryl Giebelhaus, who worked in information technology, seeing the MNS headquarters shuttered felt like a funeral.

"My feeling is, when the doors close I'm not sure how many years it will take to get it going again, if ever. I don't know," Giebelhaus said. "I would like to think that they could get their funding sorted out somehow, someday. But right now it's not looking that good."

He said the impact of the closure will be "enormous," affecting programs in sports, health and housing that together serve thousands of people.

Meanwhile, a battle to force a legislative assembly as soon as possible is still before the courts.

For his part, Giebelhaus is leaving Saskatoon, having found another job north of the city.

Favel is still absorbing the shock of being thrown out of work. He's scrambling to pay his bills, and is searching for another job.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatoon/m%C3%A9tis-nation-of-saskatchewan-shuts-its-doors-in-saskatoon-1.3016804

Drawing aboriginal voters to polls

Liberal candidates attend event at Thunderbird House

By: Alexandra Paul

Posted: 04/1/2015 3:00 AM | Comments: 2 | Last Modified: 04/1/2015 7:58 AM | Updates



Robert-Falcon Ouellette and other Liberals celebrate the 55th anniversary of indigenous voting rights.

FEDERAL Liberal candidates want indigenous people to know their vote counts.

In order to press the point, Robert-Falcon Ouellette and Rebecca Chartrand led a slate of federal Liberal candidates at Thunderbird House on Main Street Tuesday to mark the 55th anniversary of First Nations and Inuit voting rights.

About 50 people, including indigenous and non-indigenous supporters of the candidates, showed up for the noon-hour event, sharing a pipe ceremony and standing to honour indigenous songs to the beat of hand drums.

"Thirty nine per cent -- that's the percentage of people who didn't come out to vote in the last election, and that's unfortunate," Ouellette after he and Chartrand delivered speeches and introduced candidates. "There were 14 ridings won by less than 7,000 votes, and if we just had an extra percentage point come out across the country, we would have had a different government. It may have been a minority government, but the difference could have been substantial in the way we do social programming or anything."

Ouellette said the Liberals oppose new federal rules that make it harder for marginalized groups, including First Nations, to produce the identification they need to cast a vote.

"It doesn't matter if you are a billionaire or homeless living under a bridge. We all have a vote, and no one should be able to take (it) away," Ouellette said in his speech.

The Fair Elections Act requires voters to prove their identity with government identification that includes a photo and current address or two pieces of ID, such as a health-care card and a phone bill or a debit card and a bank statement, which is difficult for some to produce. In the past, federal laws allowed for voter ID cards and for vouching.

Ouellette, whom voters swept from political obscurity to third place in last year's mayoralty election, is running in the 2015 federal election in Winnipeg Centre.

Chartrand, who ran a campaign against city councillor Mike Pagtakhan in the same election in Point Douglas, is running in the Churchill riding.

The event paid tribute to March 31, 1960, the date when then-governor general Georges Vanier gave royal assent to a bill that extended the right to vote to Inuit and First Nations, a right denied on reserves under the federal Indian Act.

"The Indian Act limited our participation in Canadian society," Chartrand said in her speech, stressing the discrimination was a historic injustice.

In an effort to galvanize the aboriginal vote, inner-city activists have rolled out a social-media campaign, modelled on the success of a similar campaign called Winnipeg Indigenous Rock the Vote in last year's civic election.

One of its organizers, Lisa Forbes, said the new Facebook site, Winnipeg Indigenous Rock the Vote in the 42nd Federal Election, informs people of the new laws and advertises voter ID clinics to navigate the system.

"Indigenous Rock the Vote is here to celebrate the right to vote. And it's about helping First Nations to be able to vote, because the new laws make it harder," Forbes said.

Direct Link: http://www.winnipegfreepress.com/local/drawing-aboriginal-voters-to-polls-298262701.html

Aboriginal Sports

Cree hockey player wins rookie of the year in Quebec league

Niko Trapper's early hockey training was cut short by father's death, but he persevered

By Lindsay Visitor, Corinne Smith, CBC News Posted: Mar 27, 2015 1:09 PM CT Last Updated: Mar 27, 2015 1:09 PM CT



Niko Trapper, a 14-year-old Cree hockey player from Mistissini, was named the Rookie of the Year in the Bantam CC division in Saguenay Lac St-Jean. (Submitted by Niko Trapper)

Niko Trapper, a Cree hockey player for the Ambassadeurs de Chibougamau, was named Rookie of the Year this spring in the Bantam CC division in Saguenay Lac St-Jean, Que.

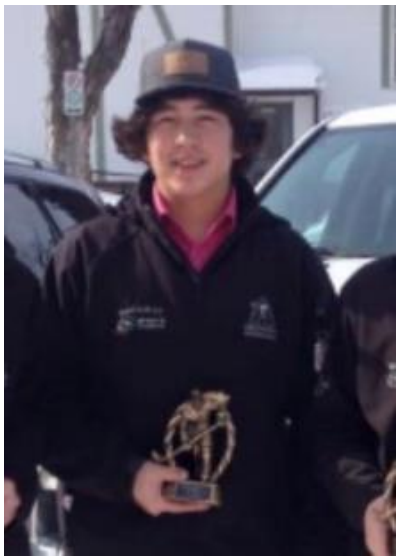
Trapper was nominated by his team coaches, and voted top rookie by a league committee.

'When you play hockey, just try your hardest.'- *Niko Trapper*

"I was kinda happy," said the 14-year-old Mistissini teen, on winning the honour.

Trapper learned to play hockey later than other players his calibre, and said now he's "just trying my hardest and trying to get farther."

As a young boy in Mistissini, he spent time in Quebec's child hockey development program — Méthode d'Apprentissage de Hockey sur Glace — but his learning was cut short when his father died.



"When you play hockey, just try your hardest," says Trapper, seen here posing with his award. (Submitted by Niko Trapper)

His family then moved to Chibougamau, and Trapper had to wait until he was nine to sign up for hockey again. He joined a Novice "A" team and quickly progressed from there.

Trapper said he is thankful he gets to live with his family while playing hockey for the Ambassadeurs. He says he can't name his "No.1 fan" because his mother, brothers and cousins are all so encouraging, even if they can't always afford to travel to his away games.

"They're always there, still, to support me," he said. "They will always be important for me."

A Secondary I student at the École Porte du Nord in Chibougamau, Trapper admits he doesn't enjoy school much — but he looks forward to playing sports every day.

"When you play hockey, just try your hardest," he said. "I'm thanking everyone for supporting me."

The league awards were presented at a Gala in early March.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/cree-hockey-player-wins-rookie-of-the-year-in-quebec-league-1.3012636

Aboriginal Hockey Tournament attracts players from across Manitoba

By Shannon Cuciz Reporter Global News, March 27, 2015 3:13 pm



WINNIPEG – More than 1,000 aboriginal hockey players from across Manitoba are in Winnipeg this weekend to showcase their talent.

The 28th annual Aboriginal Minor Hockey Tournament started with eight teams and has grown to include 78 teams, which is a record high this year.

Coaches and players travel from as far away as Norway House Cree Nation, about 460 kilometres north and a 10-hour drive from Winnipeg, for the competition at MTS Iceplex.

“We don’t get a chance to play against any other teams because we`re way up in a rural community,” said Norway House coach Edward Albert. “The only closest team would be our neighbors, which would be an hour away.”

Each team pays $600 to enter the tournament. Last year, about $40,000 was raised for the Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre.

The money is used to provide more sporting and cultural events for aboriginal students.

“It builds up recognition for the Aboriginal and First Nation peoples,” said executive director of MICEC Dennis Daneils.

A new girls division was added to the event this year, with five female bantam teams participating.

“There could be an opportunity opening up for me in the future from this experience and I just hope it happens,” said Raylynn McKay, who will be playing against other girls for the first time this weekend.

Another opportunity is around the corner with the Canadian Native Fastball Championships coming to Winnipeg this summer.

The event is expected to bring in about 5,000 athletes from across Canada.

Direct Link: http://globalnews.ca/news/1908192/aboriginal-hockey-tournament-attracts-players-from-across-manitoba/

Energy, the Environment & Natural Resources

Fort McKay, Province agree to protect Moose Lake lands

By Vincent McDermott

Thursday, March 26, 2015 5:23:31 MDT PM



Chief Jim Boucher of the Fort McKay First Nation speaks at an economic oilsands conference in this January 2014 file photo.

More than one year after the Fort McKay First Nation dropped their objections to a development near Moose Lake, the band has entered an agreement with the province to protect an area they view as culturally important.

The province has signed a letter of intent with the First Nation pledging to develop an access management plan for the area surrounding the lake, located approximately 100 kilometres north of Fort McMurray. The plan will be developed during the next year, environment minister Kyle Fawcett said in a statement, with the First Nation and industry groups operating nearby.

In 2013, the First Nation filed a regulatory appeal against the Dover Commercial Project, a planned in situ site near Moose Lake designed to produce 250,000 barrels of oil per day. The First Nation said they would only support the project if a buffer zone was established. A joint review panel rejected this request and approved the application.

The band also argued they had not been allowed to make their case before the Alberta Energy Regulator, prompting the First Nation to argue before the Alberta Court of Appeal that the AER's ruling violated their charter rights.

In February 2014, the First Nation dropped their objections to the project and reached an agreement with Athabasca Oil Corp. and PetroChina, the two companies running the project. The details of the deal were not released publicly, but the First Nation said it included business and financial opportunities for the band.

"I don't know what this will mean for that and we don't think it will have a big impact. This is seen more as a planning exercise," said Dan Stuckless, the band's environmental and regulatory manager.

If development is to continue in an area local First Nations and Metis people view as "culturally and spiritually" significant, Stuckless says all parties acknowledged a plan for the area's future needed to be created to avoid conflict.

"We do know that over the next six months, our time and resources will go towards working together to find a collaborative approach to protect the Moose Lake area as

development proceeds," he said. "Before any other development goes forward, work needs to be done to put the right protection plan in place so Moose Lake can remain what it is to the community."

Direct Link: http://www.fortmcmurraytoday.com/2015/03/26/fort-mckay-province-agree-to-protect-moose-lake-lands

First Nation occupies fisheries office in B.C. as herring fight escalates

BELLA BELLA, B.C. — The Canadian Press

Published Monday, Mar. 30 2015, 2:41 PM EDT

Last updated Tuesday, Mar. 31 2015, 1:40 PM EDT

Members of a British Columbia First Nation are vowing to continue occupying a federal office until a contentious herring fishery is closed on the central coast.

The Heiltsuk Nation began blockading a Department of Fisheries and Oceans field office on Denny Island, near Bellow Bella, on Sunday night while others camped outside the building.

By Monday afternoon, about 70 people were protesting, said Chief Councillor Marilyn Slett.

The band said there's not enough herring for a commercial fishery, but the federal government maintains the stock can support a modest harvest.

The Heiltsuk said commercial boats took about 625 metric tonnes during a two-day seine fishery last week.

Members are concerned that another gillnet fishery could open soon, leaving them without enough herring for sustenance, Slett said.

"We were pushed into this position. Our people are so afraid that the herring is being fished to levels that will devastate the stocks."

Fisheries Department spokesman David Walters said in an e-mail that scientific forecasts have shown that the herring stocks can support "modest" harvesting.

In some areas, those forecasts support a harvest rate that's twice as high as the current level, he said.

“DFO is engaged in a continued dialogue with the Heiltsuk First Nation,” Walters said.

“The department was open to compromise on setting aside or keeping closed key areas of the Heiltsuk First Nation for food, social and ceremonial and commercial Spawn on Kelp fisheries. This offer was turned down by attending Heiltsuk representatives.”

Staff continue working with the Heiltsuk to monitor stocks, and RCMP and Fisheries officers remain on scene, Walters said.

Slett said she and the band’s resource management director slept on the field office floor on Sunday night and kept warm with their coats and jackets.

“Comfort wasn’t part of the plan,” she said, adding the occupation happened quickly and followed failed talks on Sunday with the DFO’s regional director general, Susan Farlinger.

Band members and Denny Island residents who are camping outside, and in some cases drumming and singing, have provided her and the management director with hot meals and sandwiches, Slett said.

The band has been communicating with Farlinger, who may be travelling to the office for a meeting, Slett said.

The Fisheries Department declined to confirm her travel plans.

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/british-columbia/first-nation-occupies-fisheries-office-in-bc-as-herring-fight-escalates/article23690720/

Heiltsuk Will Fight to Protect Central Coast Herring

Once the lifeblood of Heiltsuk diets, herring now reduced to a rare 'treat.'

By Judith Sayers, 31 Mar 2015, TheTyee.ca



Overfishing and ocean warming have depleted herring stocks on B.C.'s central coast. Flickr photo by Keith MacDonald.

The battle over herring is ramping up, and all eyes are on the central coast as Heiltsuk children, elders, men and women stand together as warriors defending what is theirs.

In an assertion of their right to manage their herring resources, the Heiltsuk Nation has occupied a Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) field office on Denny Island, near Bella Bella, to convey its opposition to the opening of the herring-roe fishery Tuesday morning. Heiltsuk are demanding that the fishery does not proceed, but the DFO is intent on carrying out the fishery despite Heiltsuk resistance.

Heiltsuk will continue to stand strong for their stewardship of the resources, their rights and the survival of their herring stocks. The Heiltsuk won't stand alone. Other First Nations and supporters will hold rallies and protests and the issue will escalate.

Herring and herring-roe are an important mainstay of the Heiltsuk diet and way of life. Their aboriginal rights include the right to the herring fishery and to gather herring-roe.

Herring-roe is an important food source for many coastal First Nations. Many years ago, it was in great abundance for coastal First Nations. Nets were filled to overflowing. The ocean would turn milky all along the coast, signalling spawning grounds where Heiltsuk used kelp to gather herring roe. The roe was inches thick on the kelp, providing delicious food for the entire Nation. There was never a concern for lack of stocks.

Now, overfishing and warming ocean temperatures are affecting the quality and quantity of herring stocks. What was once the lifeblood of Heiltsuk diets has become more of "a treat."

The Heiltsuk are working to have their stocks returned to the levels they once were. They know if there is a herring fishery this year, their stocks will be in jeopardy. This must be a year of conservation.

Heiltsuk fishermen have been out on the waters since time immemorial. They're experts in knowing where the runs go and where they spawn. They know the signs when the herring are to arrive and how long they stay. This is sometimes referred to as traditional ecological knowledge. The Heiltsuk are very concerned about the small run sizes and the actual size of the herring. They say the runs need to rebuild. They do not want commercial fisheries to proceed, because they know this could put future herring stocks at risk. They have been communicating this information to DFO to no avail.

Traditional knowledge cast aside

DFO choses to rely on its scientific modelling of run sizes and feels that a commercial opening is warranted. Last week, it opened a commercial herring fishery without letting the Heiltsuk know. Commercial boats took an estimated 625 metric tonnes during a two-day seine fishery.

This was a very big mistake that puts them at odds with the Heiltsuk.

The Heiltsuk feel that their concerns are not being addressed. They see that their knowledge of the herring is being cast aside in favour of DFO scientists. First Nations know that DFO has not been the best manager of fisheries, and the collapse of her cod fishery on the east coast is a good example of that. Their knowledge must be part of the management of the herring fishery.

What choices do the Heiltsuk have to protect the herring fishery? They could go to court and get an injunction, but that costs a lot of time and money.

They can continue to try and meet with government officials, but Monday's cancellation of a meeting with Sue Farlinger, the DFO's regional director general, shows that the government is not interested in meeting.

They have already tried to appeal to Jimmy Pattison, who owns a Vancouver fish processing plant and owns commercial fishing licences and boats in B.C. They held a demonstration at Pattison's fish plant last week that has not been successful so far. They can get people to boycott and picket where the herring is sold. Pattison sells his catch to Overwaitea and Save on Foods, to name a few.

Or they can do as they are doing now: occupy the DFO offices and have their supporters hold rallies in support. Once again, First Nations are called into conflict because the Canadian government's paternalistic, unilateral approach leaves them no other choice. The Canadian government is motivated by conflict without any regard for aboriginal rights and title. Unlike Canada, First Nations are motivated by peace and dialogue as First Nations. But when they need to, they fight to protect their right to resources.

In B.C., First Nations are in a post Tsilhqot'in era, where management of the resources is part of their title and rights. The spawning of the herring signals the Heiltsuk's New Year and harvesting cycle -- life on the coast. The Heiltsuk will fight to ensure for their new

year, for life on the coast for this year, and for many generations to come, access to healthy herring stocks.

Direct Link: http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2015/03/31/Heiltsuk-Herring-Fight/

Land Claims & Treaty Rights

Broken promises

Pam Frampton
Published on March 28, 2015

Aboriginal groups deserve more respect

"We owe the Aboriginal Peoples a debt that is four centuries old. It is their turn to become full partners in developing an even greater Canada." — Romeo LeBlanc

Perhaps Keith Russell needs to read that mandate letter again.

In the Dec. 8, 2014 letter, Premier Paul Davis outlines what he expects his minister of Labrador and Aboriginal Affairs to do: "you will be responsible for ensuring that government engages with aboriginal governments and organizations in accordance with government's Aboriginal Consultation Policy."

The key word is consultation.

Here's the thing: the province has a signed, constitutionally protected land claims agreement with the Labrador Inuit, who are governed by the Nunatsiavut Government. That document has a chapter devoted to the Voisey's Bay mine development that sets out the provincial government's responsibilities.

It stipulates that "Canada and the province shall consult the Nunatsiavut Government prior to … attaching a condition or making an amendment to a permit or order pertaining to the Voisey's Bay project or to any other work or activity in the Voisey's Bay area."

The whole notion of consultation is so important to the Labrador Inuit that the word "consult" is defined in the land claims agreement.

Ditto for the land claims agreement between the Innu Nation and the province, but that deal has not yet been ratified.

The provincial government, it seems, is confused about what consultation means. Because it went ahead and amended its agreement with Vale to allow the exportation of

material from Voisey's Bay in exchange for $200 million, without consulting the Nunatsiavut Government.

The head of that government, President Sarah Leo, is understandably frustrated.

"When it comes to the Voisey's Bay agreement as a whole, we are required to be part of any amendments," she told me this week, adding that the province is ignoring the land claims agreement's validity and making a mockery of it.

When a member of her government said as much to Keith Russell — who is supposed to advocate for aboriginal interests — he let fly the combative comment that has been trailing him like a curse ever since: "Go ahead and take us to court, we'll win anyway."

That remark smacks of an adversarial relationship rather than a respectful alliance of governments.

And it certainly does not live up to the premier's instructions to Russell, that his conduct be "in accordance with the highest standards of professionalism, deportment and ethics."

But although Russell has become the lightning rod on this issue — and his oafish behaviour, generally, makes him an easy target — he's just a distraction.

This is about the lack of consultation, not Russell's ineptitude at diplomacy.

This government has shown previous disregard for its own policies, such as its commitment to gender equity, so I guess it should be no surprise it's done the same here. Still, to disregard its agreement with the Inuit and its agreement in principle with the Innu smacks of paternalism.

Doesn't this government want the province's founding peoples to feel included and considered?

Premier Paul Davis rationalized his government's actions to the media on Tuesday, saying it was all about protecting jobs:

"What's really important here is that we have to understand the benefits that occurred as a result of the agreement reached with Vale," the premier said.

"If we didn't do the agreement, then they could have come to a stop in mining and a stop in production. Four-hundred and seventy-five people would have been laid off; 54 per cent ... of the workforce there are aboriginal. They would have been out of work."

Perhaps the Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation would have agreed in the end, but he's still missing the point.

“They” have a right to be consulted; to be involved in decisions that affect them directly. It’s called empowerment.

The government thumbed its nose at that.

On Tuesday, the premier said he wants to improve relations with aboriginal groups and is going to meet with the leaders of the Nunatsiavut Government and the Innu Nation, likely the week of April 6.

As of Friday, neither Sarah Leo nor Innu Nation Grand Chief Anastasia Qupee had received an invitation.

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Aboriginal title in B.C.: sovereignty, but with limits

The Globe and Mail

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It’s been all of nine months since the Supreme Court of Canada for the first time recognized a native community as having “aboriginal title” – to be specific, the Tsilhqot’in Nation, with a population of about 3,000 and an area of about 1,700 square kilometres, in southern British Columbia.

On March 19, Tsilhqot’in enacted its first law, which is called the Affirmation of the Nemiah Declaration.

Courts will likely grant the same or similar status to other communities in B.C., and perhaps elsewhere in Canada. So the Nemiah Declaration may be imitated by others. It’s an important precedent.

What is “aboriginal title”? It doesn’t mean an independent country or statelet, based on how things were before contact with Europeans. Nor is it the same thing as a reserve, a band, a band council, a municipal government or an area affected by treaty rights. But whatever it is, aboriginal title has elements resembling all those things.

In 1997, the Supreme Court decided in a case called Delgamuukw that there can indeed be such a thing, but it took until 2014 for the court to conclude that the evidence showed that Tsilhqot'in is actually an instance of aboriginal title – that this particular group of six bands has hunted, fished, gathered and lived in the area, without interruption, since before Britain (or France) planted a flag asserting its own sovereignty.

The sequence of events leading to this new (and very old) status started when the native people of Tsilhqot'in challenged the granting by the government of B.C. of a commercial-logging licence in the area, in 1983.

Not surprisingly, the first specific clause in the Nemiah Declaration says, "There shall be no commercial logging." Then it goes on to forbid commercial road-building, dam-building, mining and prospecting with a view to mining.

The declaration also says there will be a system of permits for non-natives who want to visit, hunt, fish, camp, canoe and hike on the land. It invokes the Supreme Court's authority for the recognition of aboriginal title.

Nothing is simple, however. Aboriginal title is very real, but it also has very real limits. The court said that, if there is "a compelling and substantial public purpose," an "incursion" or "infringement" on the aboriginal title can be justified. It's all a matter of balancing aboriginal title with Crown sovereignty.

This whole concept is a bit like the clause in the Constitution Act, 1867, in which the federal Parliament can pass laws about "works and undertakings for the general advantage of Canada," overriding the provinces.

The Supreme Court also said that B.C. and Canadian laws of general application continue to be valid – for example, a highway traffic act setting speed limits and the rules of the road, family-law statutes or the Criminal Code.

For the time being, Premier Christy Clark of British Columbia shows no sign of proposing any incursion; nor does the federal government. But at some time in the future, B.C. or the federal government could assert, in good faith, that a pipeline, highway, hydroelectric dam, natural-gas plant, railway or mining project is vitally essential to the economy and well-being of the province or the country – and the courts might agree. Or they might not.

In other words, Tsilhqot'in has a kind of sovereignty, but it is limited. And those limits are, unfortunately, vague – and subject to future negotiation or litigation.

The Nemiah Declaration (named after a meeting in the Nemiah valley in 1989) doesn't necessarily clash with the court's incursion doctrine, just because it's not mentioned, any more than any act of Parliament or a provincial legislature has to add that it just might conceivably be struck down under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, some day.

Back in 2003 and 2004, there were some native road blocks in the Tsilhqot'in, because of the commercial-logging dispute.

In a recent radio interview, however, the tribal chairman, Chief Joe Alphonse, did not present the declaration as any kind of provocation. So there is reason to believe and hope that the declaration and subsequent laws of Tsilhqot'in will amount to a continuing dialogue.

There's a particular reason why aboriginal title has reared its head in British Columbia. When Canada persuaded B.C. to join this country in 1871, 14 treaties had been signed on Vancouver Island. Then the treaty-making stalled, except in remote northeastern B.C., which was grouped with much of Alberta and Saskatchewan in Treaty 8 – until negotiations began with the Nisga'a in 1993.

Premier Christy Clark is now so fed up with the dozens of bogged-down treaty negotiations that she announced on Wednesday that she will simply not appoint a new commissioner for the B.C. Treaty Commission, which is supposed to oversee and facilitate the process. In more than two decades of operation, the commission has spent $627-million, but has concluded just four treaties.

At this rate, it's possible that further aboriginal-title claims pursued through the courts will achieve more results, more quickly than treaty-making attempts. If so, the trend may spread beyond B.C. The Métis of Western Canada have a claim, saying that a shabby "scrip" buy-out scheme never really extinguished their title. This claim and others have been inching along, but the failure of the treaty talks in B.C. might energize the process of settling aboriginal-title disputes across Canada.

Let's just hope that lawyers are not the chief beneficiaries.

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/globe-debate/editorials/aboriginal-title-in-bc-sovereignty-but-with-limits/article23667581/

Abbott's Removal Reveals Chaos with Treaty Process

Province has 'lost the plot' on important file.

By Paul Willcocks, Yesterday, TheTyee.ca



George Abbott, a former Liberal cabinet minister, was slated to be chief commissioner of the BC Treaty Commission. Photo: Justin Langille.

It's odd the government's last-minute axing of George Abbott as its lead representative on the B.C. Treaty Commission was so quickly cast as a tale of political revenge.

Sure, Abbott, a former Liberal aboriginal affairs minister and Christy Clark leadership rival, was treated shabbily. Aboriginal Affairs Minister John Rustad recruited him six months ago. Abbott's selection had been vetted with the federal government and First Nations Summit, partners in the treaty process, and he was slated to be chief commissioner.

Then, less than two weeks before his term was to begin, the government pulled its support of Abbott. The reason? After several days of silence, Clark said her government plans to overhaul B.C.'s treaty process.

It should have seemed likely that this was more than a settling of old scores, given the political cost of this public bungling.

This week, Clark confirmed the government is tired of the B.C. Treaty Commission's lack of progress and prepared to walk away from the process.

The Treaty Commission has been a failure, with blame to be shared by all three partners and the commission. After 23 years and more than $1 billion, two treaties have been signed and are to be implemented. Another three First Nations are perhaps, close to an agreement.

Even if all those come to fruition, we are talking about treaties covering about 4,200 people after more than two decades.

First Nations alone have spent at least $627 million on the process; hiring lawyers, consultants and researchers. The federal and provincial governments have provided about $134 million in grants to help cover treaty negotiation costs. The federal government has loaned First Nations another $493 million that they must repay if they reach treaties or pull out of the process.

Dismal progress

The federal and provincial governments have likely spent at least the same amount to keep negotiations going for 23 years, with their lawyers and teams of negotiators. The provincial budget this year allocates $14 million for negotiations with First Nations.

The dismal progress is reason enough for the federal and provincial governments and First Nations Summit to take a serious look at whether the process can be fixed.

But Clark's unilateral attack on the process, with no consultation or apparent plan, is no solution.

Clark said a cabinet committee on First Nations has been working on the issue since last summer. But the committee was a secret until last week. It has held no consultations.

The working group, as she later characterized it, signals the government's priorities. Clark is the chair, and seven ministers are members. Rustad, of course, and Finance Minister Mike de Jong and Attorney General Suzanne Anton; plus Natural Gas Minister Rich Coleman, Mines Minister Bill Bennett, Forests Minister Steve Thomson and Environment Minister Mary Polak.

It looks like a committee set up to find ways to advance the province's economic agenda, rather than deal with First Nations' issues. Given the dismal social and educational conditions for too many First Nations, where is Children and Families Minister Stephanie Cadieux or Education Minister Peter Fassbender?

Since former-premier Gordon Campbell launched the "New Relationship" initiative in 2005, the government has placed much more emphasis on interim agreements with First Nations. The deals most often cover revenue sharing and land management for resource development.

The approach has undermined the treaty process, according to a 2006 joint report by the federal and provincial auditors general. First Nations are reluctant to put time and money into a slow treaty process if they could get some of the benefits with a side deal.

But a reliance on interim agreements creates three main problems. First, the deals are often negotiated when the province, or a business, wants something. A large number of bands are never going to see any benefits.

Second, they are limited in scope and impact. Real treaties give First Nations the autonomy, certainty and resources needed to begin building stronger societies.

Moral obligation

And third, the interim agreements leave major issues unresolved. The commission was created to meet a moral obligation to reach treaties, but also in recognition that the

alternative was decades of costly and risky court cases. Interim agreements don't remove that risk.

A thoughtful, carefully considered and critical look at the treaty process, with the other partners, would be a very good idea.

But the bungled Abbott appointment suggests the government has lost the plot on a key file.

If the government really has been developing a thoughtful position on the treaty process since last summer, how could Abbott have been considered the best choice until days before he started the role?

The treaty commissioners representing the federal government and First Nations criticized the flip-flop on Abbott, and expressed surprise at Clark's announcement that the province is prepared to give up on the process.

"In terms of next steps -- whether or not the Treaty Commission will be changed, whether or not it will continue to exist, how all that future will unfold with respect to treaties -- is going to be something that we do together with First Nations," Clark told reporters.

Dropping a bombshell on the other partners without warning is hardly going to encourage a co-operative approach.

Abbott's fate also suggests the government is leaning toward radical change. If the goal was to fix the process, then Abbott could be counted on for support. He was, after all, a Liberal cabinet minister for more than a decade, under Campbell and Clark.

But Abbott might not be quiet in the face of an attack on the commission that threatened the principles of treaty making.

Clark's surprise announcement has introduced tremendous uncertainty into the relationship with First Nations. That means yet another delay in the treaty process, and likely a slowdown in progress on other agreements as parties wait to see just what lies ahead.

The government needs to reveal, as quickly as possible, what its next steps will be. And it needs to demonstrate that its work on this file is not as slipshod as it now appears.

Direct Link: http://thetyee.ca/Opinion/2015/03/30/Treaty-Process-Abbott-Removal/

Modern treaties smooth development for some First Nations groups

Julie Gordon

PORT ALBERNI, B.C. — Reuters

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In Sarita Bay, a remote cove on Vancouver Island, aboriginal-owned land used for decades by loggers is slowly being reimagined as a multibillion-dollar export terminal to ship liquefied natural gas to Asia.

Aboriginal groups in British Columbia are often in the news for opposing major resource projects. But the Huu-ay-aht First Nation, who own the land where the plant would be built, have partnered with Steelhead LNG on the proposal.

Both parties say the alliance was facilitated by a so-called modern treaty reached in the past decade, which granted the Huu-ay-aht ownership over a swath of their traditional territory and jurisdictional powers.

“We wanted to open our doors to business,” Huu-ay-aht councillor John Jack said of their 18-year effort to achieve treaty status. “We wanted the soft power of being in the boardroom.”

“We weren’t really able to have those kinds of relationships before self-government,” he added.

It is a sentiment shared by other aboriginal communities with modern treaties, illustrating how such deals, though rare, are providing one model for fostering growth in poverty-hit communities and reducing conflicts over resource development.

Between 1701 and 1923, aboriginal people across much of Canada signed treaties giving up claim to their traditional lands. But in British Columbia, few signed on, leaving vast swaths of the province subject to land claims.

This has led to conflict when industry and aboriginals disagree over development on these contested lands.

Enbridge Inc’s Northern Gateway oil pipeline, for example, has faced protests and lawsuits from aboriginal groups.

Such conflict is less apparent in pockets of the province with modern-day treaties, first negotiated in Canada in the 1970s.

In northern British Columbia, the Nisga'a Nation have signed a deal on a natural gas pipeline that will cross their treaty lands, giving them numerous benefits including the option to tap pipeline capacity in the future for their own LNG plant.

"By supporting these projects we've secured long-term benefits for our people," said Nisga'a President Mitchell Stevens, adding that the community pushes its industry partners to take a sustainable approach to development.

"No one wants to get into a business to fail," he said. "We want to create a climate that encourages businesses that are willing to work with us."

To be sure, communities like the Haisla on British Columbia's northern coast and the Osoyoos in the Okanagan Valley have attracted business to their communities without treaties.

And negotiating a treaty can take decades. So far just nine of roughly 200 aboriginal groups in British Columbia are covered under fully ratified modern treaties. Others have preliminary or partial agreements.

Critics of the process say it takes too long, costs too much and is too arbitrary in settling disputes between aboriginal groups with claims on the same land. Those who sign deals say they are often criticized for "selling out" to government and industry.

The appeal of negotiated deals took another hit late last year, when Canada's top court awarded land and self-governing rights to a nontreaty aboriginal group, in what was seen by some as a more favorable outcome than settlements achieved through talks.

Still, many leaders of aboriginal groups who already have a modern treaty say they are past dwelling on such details and are focused on rebuilding communities plagued by poverty.

Just south of Vancouver, near the suburb of Delta, the imposing metal frame of a major shopping mall complex is rapidly taking shape on Tsawwassen First Nation treaty lands.

The Tsawwassen have partnered with two major Canadian developers on the malls and the construction of a nearby residential subdivision. They have also scored industrial ventures like a container inspection facility for the nearby port.

But transforming a tiny urban reserve into an independent municipality will require improved infrastructure, including a new sewage treatment plant, new roads and drainage - all at a cost of roughly $100-million.

"We've taken a huge business risk," said Tom McCarthy, the TFN's chief administrative officer. "We're willing to take that leap because we know our development model is going to work."

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/politics/modern-treaties-smooth-development-for-some-first-nations-groups/article23701064/

Yukon premier suggests bilateral accord at Bill S-6 hearings

Government, First Nations, industry meet in Whitehorse to discuss proposed legislation

CBC News Posted: Mar 31, 2015 8:55 AM CT Last Updated: Mar 31, 2015 8:55 AM CT



Parliamentary hearings on Bill S-6 were home to a packed house, as government leaders, industry, and First Nations met to discuss the proposed legislation. (Mike Rudyk/CBC)

Contrast typified the scene in Whitehorse yesterday, as a federal government all-party committee heard testimony from the territorial and First Nations governments and local industry on Bill S-6.

Bill S-6 contains proposed amendments to the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act. Yukon First Nations are opposed to the bill, saying it undermines the territory's Umbrella Final Agreement.

The day of hearings got off to an unexpected start, as Kwanlin Dun drummers interrupted Yukon Premier Darrell Pasloski with a welcome song.

Pasloski then threw out an unexpected olive branch to First Nations, saying "let's be leaders in our house and negotiate a bilateral accord... that resolves those issues."

First Nations leaders told the committee that they appreciate the sentiment. However, they were firm in their commitment to protecting the Yukon Environmental and Socio-Economic Assessment Act, with Kwanlin Dun chief Doris Bill saying "we do not take this lightly and we will fight it at all costs."

Little Salmon Carmacks First Nation chief Eric Fairclough was blunt in his reaction to Pasloski's statement, saying: "he knew our issues on it, he knew we were concerned about it, and yet he didn't do anything.

"He's saying: 'trust me, we're going to consult with you after this is passed,'" said Fairclough. "Which, it's totally wrong. It should have been up-front and dealing with First Nations in a serious way on these matters."

Previously, the Council of Yukon First Nations threatened court action, should the bill pass.

Industry divided

Representatives from industry in the Yukon also had their chance to address the committee Monday, with the Yukon Chamber of Mines and Alexco Resources coming out in favour of the bill.

However, Allison Rippin-Armstrong of Kaminak Gold Corporation had a different take, suggesting that the four amendments to the bill which have become points of contention between government and First Nations be dropped, unless the government agrees to address them.

"We do believe that the bill should be held back until there's agreement," said Rippin-Armstrong. "We would like to see the federal government come back to the table and talk to the First Nations."

The parliamentary committee that conducted the hearings in Whitehorse will eventually prepare recommendations to be delivered to the House of Commons in advance of Bill S-6's third reading.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-premier-suggests-bilateral-accord-at-bill-s-6-hearings-1.3016193

North Slave Métis settle Bathurst caribou lawsuit with N.W.T.

Métis will receive Bathurst tags once hunting ban is lifted

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The North Slave Lake Metis Alliance has settled a law suit against the territorial government, and will be getting some of the tags when the ban on hunting Bathurst caribou is lifted. (CBC)

The Northwest Territories government has sent the North Slave Métis Alliance a letter saying that once the current ban on hunting Bathurst caribou is lifted, members will be entitled to a share of tags for the herd, according to president Bill Enge.

A lawsuit against the government — filed in hopes of securing tags — has been dropped by the alliance, Enge adds.

In recent years, the territorial government has only given Bathurst caribou hunting tags to Tlicho and Yellowknives Dene members, much to the displeasure of the North Slave Métis.

"We are just happy and relieved that we have a right to harvest caribou in our backyard," says Enge.

A near-complete ban on hunting Bathurst caribou remains in effect in the territory. However, Enge says the North Slave Métis are now entitled to hunt a portion of the very small number of Bathurst caribou set aside by the government this year for community ceremonial purposes.



'We are just happy and relieved that we have a right to harvest caribou in our backyard,' says Bill Enge, president of the North Slave Métis Alliance.

It's likely too late in the season for his members to actually hunt Bathurst caribou, says Enge, "[but] we don't need to do that. We secured 23 Bluenose East caribou a week ago. That's enough for us to at least end the drought among our people. Our elders are enjoying having caribou meat in their diet again.

"But certainly, down the road, for next year, we'll be making sure our aboriginal right to hunt from the Bathurst herd vis-a-vis the ceremonial tags will be respected. And we've been told it will be respected."

Enge says it took impending court proceedings related to its lawsuit to prompt the GNWT to reconsider its stance.

The territorial government has not issued a press release regarding an agreement with the North Slave Métis Alliance.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/north-slave-m%C3%A9tis-settle-bathurst-caribou-lawsuit-with-n-w-t-1.3015585

Special Topic: Missing & Murdered Indigenous Women

Verdict in death of indigenous sex worker sparks rallies, calls for appeal

KATHRYN BLAZE CARLSON

The Globe and Mail

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The acquittal of a man in the death of a native woman in Edmonton is provoking rallies and calls for an appeal in a case activists say raises questions about the way the criminal justice system treats indigenous women.

Bradley Barton, an Ontario trucker, was found not guilty of first-degree murder last week in the 2011 death of Cindy Gladue, a 36-year-old sex worker who bled to death at the Yellowhead Inn in Edmonton from an 11-centimetre wound on her vaginal wall. Ms.

Gladue's preserved vagina was brought into court as evidence – the first time a portion of a body was presented at trial in Canada.

The Crown contended an intoxicated Ms. Gladue was unable to consent to sexual activity and that the wound was caused by a sharp object or by Mr. Barton's excessive thrusting with his hand. The defence argued Mr. Barton accidentally caused Ms. Gladue's death during consensual manual stimulation.

A letter-writing campaign on social media is urging the Crown to appeal. An online petition has garnered hundreds of signatures. And rallies have been organized for Edmonton, Ottawa, St. Paul, Alta., and Ohsweken, Ont.

Organizers say the trial might have gone differently had Ms. Gladue been white and the accused native. They say the case should be part of a national conversation on the treatment of indigenous women in a country where at least 1,181 female aboriginals were killed or went missing between 1980 and 2012.

"A lot of the women that are murdered and missing, that's all people see them as – an Indian, or a prostitute – but these women are human," said Edmonton rally organizer Fawn Lamouche, a Métis woman who said she prayed with Ms. Gladue's tearful family outside the courthouse earlier this month. "This not-guilty verdict screams that we're not valued and we're not safe."

In a statement to The Globe and Mail on Thursday, the chief Crown prosecutor for Edmonton, Michelle Doyle, said the office has 30 days to file an appeal and that "all aspects of this case are being reviewed in order to assess the next steps." She called Ms. Gladue's death "shocking and appalling" and noted "many people are commenting on this case, seeking answers and expressing outrage."

Mr. Barton's lawyer, Dino Bottos, said the evidence was "clearly doubtful" that a sharp object caused the wound and said his client had no motive to hurt Ms. Gladue. Mr. Barton did not respond to a request for comment through his lawyer.

"I can understand why [protesters] are upset – they feel it's yet another example of the system showing disregard for the lives and safety of aboriginal people," Mr. Bottos said. "I fully understand and empathize with that. But you cannot convict a person simply because you have sympathy for the victim."

Ms. Lamouche said she was also upset by the revelation on Thursday that a laptop found with Mr. Barton's belongings was not admitted as evidence. The laptop had a search history of what the judge described as pornography depicting torture. Mr. Bottos said the Crown and the defence agreed the computer should not be entered as evidence because it was unlawfully obtained.

He also said he argued against the Crown's request to use Ms. Gladue's tissue, which was concealed behind an opaque screen and shown to jurors – nine men and two women – on

an overhead projector. However, the judge said the tissue was “real evidence on the key issue in the trial” and would provide more insight than photographs.

According to court documents, the doctor who conducted Ms. Gladue’s autopsy has been a forensic pathologist for 29 years and has conducted about 6,000 autopsies. He told the court this was only the second case involving pelvic injuries in which he removed the region from the victim’s body.

The Crown’s expert later testified a sharp object caused the vaginal wound, while a defence expert told the court it was blunt-force trauma.

Jennifer Mt. Pleasant, a Six Nations woman who is co-organizing the Ohsweken rally set for Sunday, said the display of Ms. Gladue’s tissue might be justifiable through a “Western lens,” but it was an affront to indigenous culture. “When you die, you’re supposed to be buried,” she said. “It’s a gross injustice and indignity to a human body.”

Direct Link: http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/verdict-in-death-of-indigenous-sex-worker-sparks-rallies-calls-for-appeal/article23651385/

Victoria man walking to Ottawa to end violence against aboriginals

Sarah Petrescu / Times Colonist
March 27, 2015 06:00 AM



Thursday: David James Taylor, 42, plans to walk 4,600 kilometres from Victoria to Ottawa to spread a message of ending violence in aboriginal communities. Photograph By ADRIAN LAM, Times Colonist

A Victoria man who walked to Ottawa last year with little more than his sneakers, a grocery bag of supplies and a determination to honour residential-school victims will step out across the country again Saturday — this time to spread a message of non-violence.

“The walk to end violence is not just for the many murdered and missing women. It is for indigenous men and youth as well,” said David James Taylor, 42. “It’s important to bring back our core values and traditional teachings to deal with this. It affects everyone.”

According to a 2009 federal survey, aboriginal people are two times more likely than non-aboriginals to experience being victims of a violent crime. A 2014 report by the RCMP said that while aboriginal women account for four per cent of the population, they represent 16 per cent of murdered women cases and 11.3 per cent of missing women from 1980 to 2012. Statistics Canada noted aboriginal men represented 17 per cent of male murder victims in the same period.

Taylor is an Ojibway from the Curve Lake First Nation in Ontario. He moved to Victoria with his wife and teenage son a few years ago and works part-time as a First Nations education assistant for School District 63. He said he was influenced by his grandfather’s teachings and was inspired to walk across the country last year by a dream in which his grandfather visited him.

“He taught me so much about love and respect and being a First Nations man,” Taylor said.

As Taylor visited aboriginal communities across the country, hundreds came out to greet him — offering meals and places to sleep and organizing fundraising events. He had no corporate sponsorship and relied on money transfers from friends and strangers to help him along the way. His son set up a Facebook page to follow the journey.

Taylor said one of the most meaningful moments was when he received prayer ties from elders to take as an offering for the sacred fire at the closing events for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Ottawa. Prayer ties are made up of tobacco wrapped in cloth. A person’s prayers or intentions are tied into the cloth.

“They kept me grounded on my journey. It was a way for me to carry everyone with me,” Taylor said. “When I reached Ottawa, my arms were full. It was very powerful.”

Taylor said he asked the Creator for guidance on what to do next and at the end of the ceremony, several elders and other young men approached him saying they needed to do something to end violence in their communities. A friend pitched the idea of another walk.

“I said, ‘Let me go home and rest first. I just walked 4,600 kilometres,’ ” Taylor said. Now, nearly one year later, his friend and his friend’s partner have come to Victoria so they can walk the journey together. This time, they will have support along the way, with a volunteer driving an RV where they can rest and sleep.

Taylor and his team plan to walk about 30 kilometres a day, stopping in many of the same communities he visited last year. He has contacted friendship centres, community centres and schools to organize events to discuss violence and traditional teachings. The

group plans to reach Ottawa in about five months, where they will hold a ceremony and celebration. He said that while he does not have much faith in the current federal government, he has high hopes for leadership from other political parties.

“I am non-partisan but the Harper government has already shown they are not interested in this issue, so I’m hoping there’s a new government that takes notice,” Taylor said.

Taylor has set up a web page to raise funds at gofundme.com/ walktoendviolence.

- See more at: http://www.timescolonist.com/news/local/victoria-man-walking-to-ottawa-to-end-violence-against-aboriginals-1.1806124#sthash.GIHFGlSl.dpuf

Violence against Indigenous women and the case of Cindy Gladue

By
Tracey Lindberg
| March 30, 2015



This conversation is triggering and discusses violence against and the injuries of Indigenous women.

I wish we didn't have to have it and that I didn't have to say any of this.

At 12, I knew enough to be scared of the men who would drive by our yard slowly and would stare at my sister and I as we played.

At 24, I was aware enough to fear the men who hung out solo at bars and who made oddly sexualized comments to my friends and I.

At 36, knowledge of a dangerous world for Indigenous women was solidified in me and I was scared to walk down the street at night alone, and some streets during the day.

At 48, I am terrified at the vulnerability my niece faces as she travels through the world and is given the message: your body does not matter. It cannot be damaged. You do not count. You are not human. As a non-human, you cannot be murdered.

When she was 36, Cindy Gladue was a mother, a daughter, a granddaughter, a sister and a community member. Cindy Gladue was an Indigenous woman.

At 36, Cindy Gladue died from an 11 cm wound inflicted inside her from a sharp-edged instrument or, according to Brad Barton -- who was found not guilty of first degree murder even though he admitted to inflicting the wound that killed her -- his hand inside of her vagina. We know this because her body parts were before the courtroom for observation in the deliberation to determine whether Cindy Gladue was murdered.

There is nothing I can say that would prepare anyone, any of us, for how triggering and appalling this is. There is no vocabulary to describe or unpack to the violence of this; I am sorry to repeat it.

Perhaps this explains the relative silence in the Canadian and international media about this. Some media outlets responded with what has become an unsurprising lack of empathy or investigation. Others were seemingly confused about how to discuss her death -- "accidental death by sex act, or murder?" asked one.

To those who know the legacy of violence that impacts us as Indigenous women, there is no confusion. We know this fear, we know this dehumanization and we know the impact that it does not seem to have on the mindset of many, many Canadians. Including Prime Minister Harper.

The refusal to address the countless -- and don't let the number 1,200 fool you -- that number is limited to 'known and traceable' girls and women -- number of our women and girls who are murdered and missing is of great significance in Canadian society. If we are unable to have violence acknowledged that Indigenous women face when physically ripped apart and with body parts on display before a jury, how confident can we be with the statistics that tell us how many of us have actually gone missing?

For you see, if the Prime Minister of Canada, a man with authority and access to all of the information about missing and murdered Indigenous women, continues to assert boldly that the deaths of our women are not a "sociological phenomenon," if the Minister he appointed to address Aboriginal Affairs can assert publicly and without shame that "…there's a lack of respect for women and girls on reserves… So you know, if the guys grow up believing that women have no rights, that is how they are treated," and if 11 Canadian jurors can find that Cindy Gladue was not murdered, we have to begin to address publicly the reality that many of us have shared privately: Indigenous women are being erased not just by the peoples who kill us, but also by the systems that endorse that violence through silence or complicity.

And that by some absurd racialized alchemy, being an Indigenous woman is transmuted to owned, with ownership vesting the person who owns us with the right to do as s/he pleases with our dehumanized bodies.

Murders are happening, are taking place in huge numbers. We are not merely "missing." We are taken. Made to disappear. It is a phenomenon, it is happening, and it is happening in Prime Minister Harper's Calgary riding and near his home in Ottawa. It is happening in hotel rooms in Edmonton and it is happening on dirt roads near Saskatoon and Regina. It is happening in cities, in towns, and in communities across Canada -- many, many of them.

We know that it is not a problem of evidence, but of observability. The 11 jurors in this case (reportedly nine non-Indigenous men and two non-Indigenous women) had evidence before them that included Cindy Gladue's body parts. We don't know what else they had. We don't know what their perspective or understanding was. We don't know what compelling arguments they heard that convinced them that she had not been murdered.

What we do know is that many, many messages we get in the media reinforce the understanding that we, as Indigenous women, are disposable. That we as Indigenous women are, that the Indigenous body is, understood to be incapable of harm. Canada's Prime Minister tells us that these murders are not (occurrences, events, happening, facts, observed or observable) phenomenon. The verdict in the trial for the murder of Cindy Gladue supports this: the case asserts the understanding that a murder did not happen. That Cindy Gladue's death was not causally related to a non-consensual act. That a murder was not observable.

As long as people continue to assert this absurd blindness to the erasure of Indigenous peoples and the impossibility of violence marking Indigenous bodies, Indigenous peoples will continue to feel and may actually be hunted.

There is more to this, we are better than this, and our women -- all women -- deserve a better result than this. Regardless of race, occupation, home, and culture. Because of those and because of our belief in the value of every human and the reverence we must have for all of our relatives. Because we believe Indigenous peoples and Indigenous bodies are worthy of protection. Because Indigenous peoples are humans and humans possess the right to lives without violence.

Because we, too, love our granddaughters, daughters and nieces.

Tracey Lindberg is a citizen of the Kelly Lake Cree Nation / As'in'i'wa'chi Ni'yaw Nation Rocky Mountain Cree. She is a scholar and Indigenous rights advocate.

Direct Link: http://rabble.ca/blogs/bloggers/views-expressed/2015/03/violence-against-indigenous-women-and-case-cindy-

gladue?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+rabble-news+%28rabble.ca+-+News+for+the+rest+of+us%29

Administration costs for federal program promoting safety of aboriginal women reach $2.2M: report

Douglas Quan 03.30.2015

The federal government has spent almost as much administering a five-year-old program promoting the safety of aboriginal women and girls as it has on actual contributions to aboriginal communities, says a new internal report.

The $5.7-million Aboriginal Community Safety Development Contribution Program was part of the Conservative government's highly touted response in 2010 to the problem of missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Its aim was to help First Nations identify root causes of violence, develop "community-driven" responses and implement "holistic, aboriginal healing models."

So far, the government has spent $2.2-million just on administration, almost what it has spent on direct funding to aboriginal communities, $2.3-million, under the same program.

"There appears to be considerable opportunity for greater efficiency," the report said.

Further, only nine First Nations have developed community safety plans, even though workshops have been held in at least 25 of them, the report said, noting it has been a challenge to sustain community involvement and progress will likely remain "slow and incremental."

The evaluation report, posted on Public Safety Canada's website, comes amid calls from critics for the government to hold a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women.

Last year, a report by the Royal Mounted Canadian Police found aboriginals accounted for 16% of murdered women and girls, and 11% of missing females in 1980-2012, even though they make up only 4% of the population.

Public Safety Canada officials were not able to comment on the report Monday. However, the document stressed the government is committed to improving collaboration between departments serving aboriginals and creating more supporting materials to guide communities in developing safety plans.

In 2010, Ottawa announced it would invest $25-million over five years to address the high number of missing and murdered aboriginal women, of which $5.7-million would be made available to aboriginal communities to help them develop safety plans.

Government workers identified First Nations communities they believed could benefit from this approach, then began to hold workshops with their leaders to help them identify priorities.

Appearing before the Senate committee on aboriginal peoples in June 2013, Shawn Tupper, then an assistant deputy minister in Public Safety Canada, touted the success of the initiative in the isolated Eabametoong First Nation in northern Ontario.

Its leaders declared a state of emergency in October 2010 after a series of violent incidents since the beginning of the year, including three murders and 47 arsons.

"We are desperate for outside help," Lewis Nate, then the band chief, said at the time.

With government support, the community was able to draft a proposed safety plan by February 2012, Mr. Tupper told the committee.

But the recent program evaluation found the cost of administration was high because there was some "trial and error" in the first few years related to workshops and the need for continuing support from program staff after they ended.

Many aboriginal communities are "accustomed to 'being told what to do,' so it represents a significant adaptation to get used to a community-driven process," the report said.

Progress is "often followed by a period with no progress."

While the initiative has helped empower aboriginal communities and motivate them to address safety issues, there have only been a "modest" number of workshops held and safety plans developed, the report said.

Training aboriginal facilitators, especially in high-risk communities, has been insufficient in some cases. And "there does not appear to be agreement about what constitutes a safe community and how that would be measured."

A spokeswoman for the Assembly of First Nations was not able to provide comment by deadline.

Direct Link:
http://www.calgaryherald.com/news/national/Administration+costs+federal+program+promoting+safety/10933019/story.html

Another International Call for Inquiry Into Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women in Canada

ICTMN Staff
3/31/15

Indigenous leaders in Canada have welcomed yet another report urging the federal government to examine the disproportionate rate of violence against aboriginal women, but the government does not seem any closer to convening one.

This time the call came from the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), which released a report earlier this month and said the lack of a national inquiry to date constitutes a "grave violation of human rights," according to report authors Niklas Bruun and Barbara Bailey.

"Aboriginal women and girls are more likely to be victims of violence than men or non-Aboriginal women, and they are more likely to die as a result," said CEDAW members Bruun and Bailey in a statement after issuing the report on March 6. "Yet, despite the seriousness of the situation, the Canadian State has not sufficiently implemented measures to ensure that cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women are effectively investigated and prosecuted."

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) has found that 16 percent of murdered women and girls are indigenous, as are 11 percent of those who went missing between 1980 and 2012, the *National Post* reported. In comparison, they make up just four percent of the population.

"The violence inflicted on aboriginal women is often rooted in the deep socioeconomic inequalities and discrimination their communities face and which can be traced back to the period of colonisation," said Bruun and Bailey. "During the inquiry, NGOs indicated to us that young aboriginal women are five times more likely than other Canadian women of the same age to die of violence. Aboriginal women and girls also experience high levels of sexual abuse and violence in their own families and communities, as well as within wider society."

In all, CEDAW recommended 38 measures that Canada should take, one of them being a national inquiry. Another involves developing a national plan to address violence against indigenous women in all its forms, CEDAW said in its statement. Bruun and Bailey visited Canada in 2013 and spoke to numerous nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), as well as the Canadian government. What they found reflected what many others have said before.

CEDAW is just the latest group advocating for a national inquiry into exactly why indigenous women are more prone to experiencing violence than others in the population.

In January the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), a branch of the Organization of American States, came to the same conclusion.

However, the government has consistently refused, saying that enough studies had been done. As recently as March 30, the federal Status of Women Minister Kellie Leitch reiterated the government line, that there have already been numerous studies of the matter, and that action is what's needed.

"We don't need more lawyers looking at what the problem is," she told Vice in a March 30 story. "We need people acting on the problem so that these families are supported so that these families have answers to their questions. We're not going to achieve more by looking at the same issue and having more lawyers write more documents."

But indigenous leaders said an in-depth look at the colonial underpinnings of the problem is necessary, and such a study has not been done.

"Canada's inaction in regard to missing and murdered Indigenous women is getting increasing international attention, and this latest from CEDAW calling it a 'grave violation of human rights' cannot be ignored," said AFN National Chief Perry Bellegarde in a statement. "The loss of almost 1,200 indigenous women and girls is not an indigenous issue, it's a Canadian issue. We continue to push for a national inquiry that would identify the root causes of violence, and for coordinated action across all jurisdictions to prevent and address violence against our sisters, mothers and daughters."

The Union of B.C. Indian Chiefs (UBCIC) also supported CEDAW's findings and emphasized the necessity of implementing the group's recommendations.

"We absolutely reject the baseless stance taken by the Harper government that a national inquiry is not needed," said Grand Chief Stewart Phillip, president of the UBCIC, in a statement. "As we continue to stress, to truly address and eliminate the tragic and devastating issues of violence against indigenous women and girls, the Harper government must be compelled and forced to examine the intersecting and deeply-rooted factors of poverty, colonialism and systemic racism. In finding that Canada is violating the rights of Indigenous women and girls, this critical and urgent report by CEDAW strengthens and builds on the comprehensive reports released by United Nations Special Rapporteur on Indigenous Peoples James Anaya and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights."

"This is an extremely important report for Canada," said Dawn Harvard, interim president of the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC), in a statement. "Canada has been told, first by the Inter American Commission on Human Rights, and now by the United Nations CEDAW Committee, that Canada's failures to act violate the human rights of Aboriginal women."

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/03/31/another-international-call-inquiry-murdered-and-missing-indigenous-women-canada-159828

Manitobans react to controversy over minister's remarks on native men, MMIW cases



Sheila North Wilson, CTV Winnipeg
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By day, Larry Morrissette and Mitch Bourbonniere talk about ways to teach young native men to lead productive lives.

At night, starting next month, they'll be walking the streets with some of those men, patrolling the community as the Bear Clan Patrol to keep their neighbourhoods safe.

"Speaking for myself as an aboriginal man, I'm (violence) free. I don't believe in any type of abuse in any way. I try to live my life in that way and I try to teach that to my kids and (to) the young people I work with," said Morrissette.

His experience flies in the face of figures being used by Canada's aboriginal affairs minister.

In a closed door meeting with Alberta chiefs last week, Bernard Valcourt reportedly told them that indigenous men are responsible for 70 per cent of the murders of indigenous women, a statement sparking controversy.

“(For) a high ranking politician to come out and actually, say, ‘Oh, it's aboriginal men killing aboriginal women,’ it's just another layer of racism," said Bourbonniere.

The RCMP, meanwhile, have not backed up Valcourt's claim. In an email, the Mounties said among most of the solved cases of murdered native women, up to 70 percent of their spouses, family members or acquaintances are responsible for their deaths.

But critics said that doesn't necessarily mean all of those are native men.

"We all know that that number is not backed up by any of the RCMP reports. So will the minister stand in this house and release the data based on which he made his claim? Or will he get up and tell us he made this number up to suit their discriminatory agenda?" asked Manitoba MP Niki Ashton last week during question period in Ottawa.

"I don't disclose specifics of closed door meetings. I can assure the honourable member that the discussions were productive," replied Valcourt.

Criminal justice experts would like to see the numbers too.

By not releasing them, Kevin Walby said the government is fostering negative stereotypes and making overgeneralizations about statistics.

"It's quite regrettable when a minister continues make those kind of statements and not provide broader context," said Walby a University of Winnipeg assistant professor of criminal justice.

Morrissette and Bourbonniere said they'd like Valcourt to see what they see - vulnerable girls who need protecting and native men standing up for them.

CTV tried to contact Minister Valcourt's office Tuesday, but he wasn't made available to comment.

Direct Link: http://winnipeg.ctvnews.ca/manitobans-react-to-controversy-over-minister-s-remarks-on-native-men-mmiw-cases-1.2306328

RCMP to release 'update' report on murdered, missing Indigenous women file in May

National News | April 1, 2015 by Jorge Barrera | 0 Comments



Jorge Barrera
APTN National News

The RCMP will be releasing a report updating its ongoing work on the murdered and missing Indigenous women's file in May, according to a spokesperson for the federal police force.

The spokesperson also rejected a call Tuesday from Aboriginal Affairs Minister Bernard Valcourt's office for the RCMP to release all the information it has compiled on murdered and missing Indigenous women.

RCMP spokesperson Sgt. Harold Pfleiderer said the RCMP would release an "update" on the next steps mentioned in last year's release of the force's National Overview on Murdered and Missing Aboriginal Women. Pfleiderer said the expected May report from the RCMP would focus on the "next steps" identified in the report released last year.

The next steps include a focus on "enhancing efforts on unresolved cases." About 46 per cent of missing and murdered Indigenous women cases fall under provincial or municipal police jurisdiction. The RCMP has said it provided some of its relevant data to police forces to improve their chances of solving cold cases. The RCMP also said it wanted to improve the way it gathers data. The RCMP also said it would be rolling out changes on how it collects information on murders or missing persons cases which included using Aboriginal origin as an identifier.

The other two "next steps" in the report mention the use of the new data to improve prevention efforts and "increasing" public awareness.

The new report, however, will not include "statistics on the ethnicity of the perpetrators of solved Aboriginal women homicides," said Pfleiderer, in an emailed statement.

Earlier Tuesday, Valcourt's office sent a statement to *ATPN* calling on the RCMP to release all its information on the file.

"We encourage the RCMP to release this information," said the statement.

The statement was in response to an *APTN* question on a letter sent by Treaty 6 Grand Chief Bernice Martial Monday to RCMP Commissioner Bob Paulson. The letter asked

Paulson to release the entirety of its murdered and missing Indigenous women information.

APTN forwarded the statement from the minister's office to Pfleiderer seeking a response.

Valcourt claimed in a closed-door meeting on March 20 that RCMP data shows Indigenous men are responsible for 70 per cent of the murders of Indigenous women.

APTN National News has learned other First Nation leaders have also received portions of unreleased information from the RCMP's 1,181 missing and murdered Indigenous women cases held by about 200 police departments dating back to 1980.

Supt. Tyler Bates, who is in charge of Aboriginal policing, told *APTN* in 2013 not all the information compiled by the RCMP as part of the project would be made public.

Direct Link: http://aptn.ca/news/2015/04/01/rcmp-release-update-report-murdered-missing-indigenous-women-file-may/

Cindy Gladue case: Not guilty verdict prompts rallies calling for appeal

WARNING: This story contains graphic content

By Kim Wheeler, CBC News Posted: Mar 31, 2015 7:42 PM ET Last Updated: Mar 31, 2015 9:50 PM ET



Women in Edmonton make signs for a rally supporting an appeal in the case of Cindy Gladue. (Facebook)

The recent not guilty verdict in the murder trial of an Ontario man accused of killing Cindy Gladue, whose body was found in the bathtub of an Edmonton hotel room, has prompted protest and calls for an appeal.

Gladue, 36, was a Cree mother of three who lived in Edmonton. Found dead in an Edmonton hotel room in June 2011, she had bled to death from an 11-centimetre wound in her vagina.

The defence for Bradley Barton, a long-distance trucker from Ontario, argued the wound was the result of rough sex, while the prosecution said Barton used a weapon on Gladue, who was a sex worker.

On March 18, a jury found Barton not guilty of first-degree murder, as well as of manslaughter in Gladue's death.

Rallies are planned from St. John's to Victoria on Thursday calling for an appeal of the verdict.

"People I have spoke to across the country are just in dismay that somebody could dismiss a life like that," Lynda Budreau-Smaganis told CBC's *The Current.*

Budreau-Smaganis is a Cree Métis elder from St. Paul, Alta., who supported Gladue's family throughout the trial.

"The family is really grateful that people care. When you lose a child and it's dismissed that she had no value, it just harms you," she said.

Rallying call

Fawn Lamouche was invited by a friend to demonstrate at the courthouse during the trial, in support of the family.



Cindy Gladue is pictured in a rally poster from Facebook. (Facebook)

"When I saw how much pain Cindy's family was in, especially her mom and daughters, I was really impacted," said Lamouche.

After the verdict was handed down, Lamouche felt compelled to do something, so she set about organizing a rally in Edmonton where supporters could sign letters calling for an appeal of the verdict.

"A lot of us have had enough of the justice system failing us," said Lamouche.

Shortly after, people in other cities joined Lamouche's call, and organized rallies of their own. Through social media the rallies have been planned for the same day, April 2.

Edmonton's rally will take place at noon at Churchill Square, across from the courthouse.

Toronto organizer Audrey Huntley called the verdict horrifying and outrageous. She said the dehumanizing treatment of Gladue by the court is what drove her to do something publicly.

Huntley is the co-founder of No More Silence, an advocacy group that raises awareness of missing and murdered indigenous women.

Toronto's rally will take place at noon ET at the Ministry of the Attorney General's office.

Lawyers react

The defence lawyer in the case, Dino Bottos, told CBC News that he understands the aboriginal community's reaction. Many people, he said, have the simplistic belief that "he was a white male and he must have got off because she was an aboriginal prostitute."

Very few people showed up for the trial, he said.

"All of these protesters, I have to say, with the greatest of respect, were not in the courtroom."

There were no aboriginal jurors for the trial.

"Juries are supposed to be a cross-section of your peers from society," said First Nations lawyer Will Willier. "So what has transpired here is that we have nine men, two women, one Asian person and one black person, but no aboriginal people so they don't really understand or empathize or identify with Cindy Gladue."

"Had they identified or understood her better, the verdict may have been different."

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/aboriginal/cindy-gladue-case-not-guilty-verdict-prompts-rallies-calling-for-appeal-1.3016603

Cindy Gladue murder case: Alberta Crown appeals acquittal

CBC News Posted: Apr 02, 2015 10:05 AM MT Last Updated: Apr 02, 2015 10:29 AM MT



Cindy Gladue, 36, was found dead in the bathtub of an Edmonton hotel room four years ago. (Facebook)

Crown prosecutors in Alberta have filed an appeal over the acquittal of an Ontario truck driver in the death of an Edmonton sex worker.

"The death of Cindy Gladue was shocking and appalling," head Crown prosecutor Michelle Doyle said in a statement today.

"It also resulted in significant harm to her family and the community and the [Alberta Crown Prosecution Service] continues to take that very seriously."

Last month, a jury found long-distance trucker Bradley Barton not guilty of first-degree murder or manslaughter in Gladue's death. Barton, 56, is from Mississauga.

The 36-year-old Cree sex worker, and mother of three, bled to death in the bathtub of Barton's Edmonton hotel room in June 2011.

The decision outraged people who called the decision another sign of systemic bias against indigenous women. Rallies to draw attention to the case are taking place across the country today.

Direct Link: http://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/edmonton/cindy-gladue-murder-case-alberta-crown-appeals-acquittal-1.3019532

Special Topic: International Indigenous Populations

Native American Tribe--With Tax Exempt Casinos--Has Nation's First Junk Food Tax

3/27/2015 @ 8:58AM

Junk food taxes are sin taxes to control behavior, but they also raise revenue. With obesity, diabetes and other health problems on the rise, junk food taxes are hardly a novel concept. But they have been hard fought and harder to pass. Not anymore. Ironically, a tax exempt Native American Tribe, the Navajo Nation, is the first jurisdiction in America to impose one.

The Navajo reservation encompasses a territory the size of West Virginia, straddling Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The Navajos passed a 2 percent sales tax on pastries, chips, soda, desserts, fried foods, sweetened beverages, and other products with "minimal-to-no-nutritional value." The tax has been a long time coming, but its arrival is still historic. Although sin taxes are imposed on producers or sellers, they are almost inevitably passed on to buyers. They differ from sales taxes mostly by being more targeted. Suspect services can be targeted too.



There are similar fat and sugar tax initiatives outside the United States. Mexico has one. But there has not been one in the U.S. until now. The sales tax will generate an estimated $1 million a year in 110 tribal chapters for greenhouses, food processing and storage facilities, traditional foods cooking classes, community gardens, farmers' markets, etc.

According to the Indian Health Service, about 25,000 of the Navajo Nation's 300,000 members have type-2 diabetes. Another 75,000 are pre-diabetic. There is rampant hypertension and cardiovascular disease. The legislation was vetoed three times by

Navajo Nation President Ben Shelly, because of questions about how the tax would be regulated. There have been worries over the potential impact on small business owners and consumers. But eventually, the tax gained favor.

Although this is America's first junk-food tax, Berkeley, California has gone part way there with the nation's first soda tax. Curiously, Native American tribes and their wholly owned tribal corporations are not subject to federal income taxes on their earnings. 236 Native American tribes operate 422 facilities across 28 states. Yet tribes are exempt from federal income taxes even when conducting commercial activities. They can form corporations to conduct business, and their income remains exempt.

However, exempt tribal income can be taxed when distributed to individual members of the tribe. One of the more complicated rules permits Native American tribes to make per capita distributions of revenue from gaming activities to tribe members. These per capita distributions are taxed.

Some "general welfare" payments to individuals under social benefit programs are *not* taxed. In general, to be tax-free, payments must be made under a governmental program; be for the promotion of general welfare (*i.e.*, based generally on individual, family or other needs); and not be compensation for services.

Absent an express authorization from Congress, states do not have the power to tax Native Americans living on a reservation whose income is derived from reservation sources. However, a state *may* tax Native Americans on income (including wages from tribal employment) if they reside in the state but outside the reservation. As with many other tax rules, these rules are becoming more controversial.

Direct Link: http://www.forbes.com/sites/robertwood/2015/03/27/native-american-tribe-with-tax-exempt-casinos-has-nations-first-junk-food-tax/

Tocabe x2: Native American Eatery in Denver Doubles-down on Success

Lynn Armitage
3/28/15

In 2011, Tocabe, an American Indian eatery in Colorado, was featured on Food Network's *Diners, Drive-Ins and Dives.* Co-owner Ben Jacobs said that episode put the only native-owned and operated restaurant in Denver on the map.

"It changed our business overnight," said 31-year-old Jacobs, Osage, who started the restaurant with his college buddy, Matt Chandra. In 2012, they were named "Entrepreneurs of the Year" by the National Center for American Indian Enterprise

Development (NCAIED). “People still come in and say they saw us on the show and couldn’t wait to come in. It’s aired many times since and [it’s] on Netflix now.”

The history-major-turned-restaurateur has already beaten the odds. According to the National Restaurant Association, 30 percent of new restaurants fail the first year, and of those that survive, another 30 percent close in the next two years. This year, Tocabe (an old Osage word that means “blue”) will mark seven years in business in the most celebratory way possible — with the opening of a second, 2,500-square-foot restaurant, which opened in Denver March 7.

Jacobs said he and Chandra share a vision of becoming a national chain, but they are being very methodical about their growth. “We don’t think every town could have a ton of these. But we think a lot of towns could have one or two.”


The interior of Tocabe restaurant in Denver, Colorado. (Courtesy Tocabe)

Tocabe provides jobs for 41 people, including 18 Natives from the Apache, Arapahoe, Cheyenne, Ojibwe and Mandan tribes, to name a few. They serve up homemade Native-inspired dishes such as bison ribs with blueberry BBQ sauce, green-chili stew, corn soup and Osage hominy.

Jacobs spoke to *Indian Country Today Media Network* about his restaurant concept and the growth of Native American cuisine:

How popular is Native American food?

We are definitely on to something, and so are a lot of people. Although we are one of the oldest cultures in America, we have the youngest cuisine, because it’s not clearly defined. The food varies so much because there are so many tribes and different regions. About 80 percent of our customers are non-native, and that speaks volumes. We want to give voice to American Indian cuisine and culture, and make sure native foods are in the conversation of all foods.

What differentiates Native American cuisine?

Our ingredients and recipes. But many of the foods in this country have their origins in Native food. Clam chowder, for instance. Everyone thinks it's from New England, but it was originally a Wampanoag-style soup. And Cajun and Creole gumbo uses file powder, which is dried sassafras leaves, and that's something the Houma Nation always used in their foods.

How do you get around the perception that Native food is unhealthy?

Native food is inherently healthy. But far too often, fry-bread is the only discussion of what our food is and that's the frustration I have because Native food is so much more. Dried corn is a traditional, healthy food that we serve. Wild rice is healthy. All our veggies our cut fresh; all our proteins are lean, marinated meats. We serve fry-bread, but it's only one dish, and it isn't what makes us unhealthy. It's all the other foods we eat: cheeseburgers, fries, pizza and soda pop. When people say frybread is a food that was forced upon us and we shouldn't be eating it, it's degrading to the women in our lives. Women had to do something to sustain their families and frybread is something they came up with. It was a survival food. We shouldn't forget that or discredit women for what they did for us as a people.

Where do you get your recipes?

We learn from family and friends, and work with the USDA and food distribution programs on reservations. We travel around to different tribal communities and learn about their traditional foods, what's important to them, and bring those experiences back into our restaurant. For our jambalaya, for instance, we use wild rice from Canada and cook it using a technique we learned from the Houmas in Louisiana.

Do you prefer to use Native suppliers?

We look at native-or tribal-owned companies first, and if we can't do that, we go to other suppliers. To make our salad dressings, we use Seka Hills olive oil and vinegar from the Yocha Dehe tribe in California. We get our tepary beans and wheat berries from Ramona Farms in Arizona, and wild rice from Red Lake Nation Foods in Minnesota.


Ribs and frybread with blueberry sauce (Courtesy Tocabe)

I think the farm-to-fork movement is cool and we do get tomatoes, onions, squash and other things locally. But at the same time, people should be open to using products that they can't get within 100 miles. We don't limit our suppliers to the continental U.S. And just because some of our products are coming from a great distance, doesn't make them any less high quality.

Contributing business writer Lynn Armitage is an enrolled member of the Oneida Tribe of Indians of Wisconsin … and very hungry at the moment.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/03/28/tocabe-x2-native-american-eatery-denver-doubles-down-success-159788

Rest for the King, No Rest for Native Americans

Posted: 03/29/2015 12:08 pm EDT Updated: 03/29/2015 12:59 pm EDT



Written by Chip Colwell

Today, the King of England will be deposited back into the earth. The public ceremony will be respectful and uncontroversial. Archaeologists will not write angry editorials, sign petitions or organize protests about Richard III, who died 530 years ago.

Richard III's body was a treasure house for science and history. Discovered in 2012 under a Leicester parking lot, the skeleton of the last English monarch to die in battle quickly became the subject of intense public scrutiny. The archaeological study of the remains provided vital historical answers to the king's controversial life and death. Just several bones and teeth offered science a wealth of data about the king's origins, movements, lifestyle and diet. Yet, Richard III's fate was not to be preserved in a museum but returned to a grave.

The silence of scientists on Richard III's reburial is deafening. It stands in stark contrast to how so many regard the reburial of Native American human remains in museums. Around the world archaeologists have resisted the return of skeletons for decades -- arguing that they are needed for science. Even nearly 25 years after the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act became federal law, only 27% of the Native skeletons in U.S. museums have been offered for return. More than 100,000 skeletons continue to sit on shelves. In Europe, only in the last few years have the first sets of Native American remains come home.

Then again, the silence is not especially surprising. The double standard for White and Indian bodies has a long and established tradition.

In 1923, a Chicago journalist named Edward Page Gaston grabbed international headlines in a search for the body of the legendary "Indian-Princess" Pocahontas who died in England. In a kind of archaeological dragnet Gaston dug up 100 dead reposing in a cemetery. Britons didn't mind the search for the Indian royalty, but the disturbance of their own bloodlines was too much. Authorities stopped the excavation and reburied the dead.

In 1971, a cemetery was discovered during an Iowa road project. Archaeologists arrived. They excavated 27 skeletons dating to the 1800s. Based on the grave goods, 26 people were deemed white. They were placed in new caskets and swiftly reburied in a local cemetery. The last body, a young woman, was believed to be Native American. She was boxed up and taken to the Iowa state archaeologist for study.

These attitudes explain why museums across the U.S. and around the world are still filled with the remains of American Indians.

By the late 1980s, most archaeologists conceded that Native Americans should be able to rebury blood relatives. The parallel here with Richard III jumps out: His family's living relatives donated their DNA for identification and, although some disputed the location of his final resting place, helped direct the king's reburial.

And yet, to reduce the argument to biology only extends the injustice against Native Americans. Recent genetic studies do prove that some Native peoples' can trace their ancestry back thousands of years to people buried in their own backyard. But, the belief that a responsibility for an ancestor comes from biological connection is distinct to Western thought and law. Many Native Americans feel their ancestry is shaped as much by place (anyone who lived in their homeland), interconnectedness (all Native Americans came into being together), and spirituality (the dead, if disturbed, can harm the living). Western cultural norms should not exclusively dictate how Native Americans are allowed to be stewards of their own past.

I am heartened that the descendants of King Richard III were able to rebury their ancestor. Perhaps those in England and beyond might now offer the Indian dead the same respect. As the Leicester city mayor said, speaking of the king, "It's now our opportunity to put it right and to make sure this time that it's done with dignity and honour."

Why should Native Americans be treated any different?

Dr. Chip Colwell is curator of anthropology at the Denver Museum of Nature & Science, and the author of the forthcoming Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America's Treasures.

Direct Link: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/rest-for-the-king-no-rest-for-native-americans_b_6946396.html?

New Obama administration fracking regs especially hurt Native Americans

March 29, 2015 1:45 am • JILLIAN MELCHIOR



Last summer, as President Barack Obama visited the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe in Cannon Ball, he called the economic and educational hardships faced by Native Americans “a moral call to action.” The president has claimed he will write a “new

chapter" by keeping promises to Native Americans, but sadly, his administration's recent regulations deny Native Americans economic opportunities they sorely need.

Consider the Department of the Interior last week released top-down regulation of fracking on tribal lands, which the federal government holds in trust. These redundant rules leave American Indians at a competitive disadvantage, quashing a huge opportunity for economic growth.

Tribal lands host an outsized — and grossly underdeveloped — share of energy resources. As the Washington Times recently noted, "About 25 percent of the nation's onshore oil and gas reserves rest underneath tribal lands, but those lands account for roughly 5 percent of U.S. production."

Development of these resources could change the lives of American Indians. The Council of Energy Resource Tribes estimates the energy resources on tribal lands could be worth as much as $1.5 trillion. In addition to raising revenue, energy development would also create good jobs, even for workers with little education.

Native Americans desperately need this sort of economic boost. More than one in four live in poverty, according to the Pew Research Center. Their high school graduation rates linger at 17 percent below the national average. Even as the economic recovery continues, native people continue to experience roughly double the unemployment rate of the nation.

Nonetheless, the federal government's dysfunctional relationship with tribes has crippled energy development, according to a February 2014 report by the Property and Environment Research Center.

"On Indian lands, companies must go through at least four federal agencies and 49 steps to acquire a permit for energy development, compared to as few as four steps off reservations," writes the report's author, Shawn Regan. "The effect of this complicated bureaucracy is to raise the cost of entering into resource development agreements with tribes or individual Indians."

Under the management of the federal government, tribal fossil fuel sales dropped 21 percent between 2003 and 2013, according to the Energy Information Administration. On state and private lands, they grew 34 percent during the same time period.

Native Americans know that the federal government is stifling their energy development and economic growth. Testifying to Congress last April, James "Mike" Olguin, the acting chairman of the Southern Ute Indian Tribal Council, denounced the "unacceptable, bureaucracy-driven delays in federal approval of mineral leases and drilling permits."

Olguin described how, on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, tribes "watched their non-Indian neighbors get rich from mineral resource development, as their Indian lands remained unleased and undrilled month after month while awaiting federal approval and

permitting." He decried the "punitive effect of those delays on the poorest individuals and communities in the U.S."

Likewise, the National Congress of American Indians recently wrote that it "urges Congress and the Administration to remove barriers to the deployment of these energy resources that offer immense benefits to tribes, Native citizens, surrounding communities, and the American economy."

But instead of loosening the red tape restraining energy development on tribal lands, the Obama administration tightened the bonds. The Department of the Interior issued new regulations on hydraulic fracturing that apply only to federal and Indian lands, not state or private property.

Energy developers who are considering exploration on Indian lands know that they will face new requirements on wastewater disposal, well construction and disclosure. Why bother with the added hassle and expense?

Already, states have led the way in creating sensible fracking regulation. They know their residents, environment and economies better than the federal government does, and they've crafted policies to match the unique needs of their state. American Indians should have the chance to do the same on their lands.

The Department of the Interior's new fracking regulations make it harder for American Indians to compete and to have their shot at the American dream. Unless the Obama administration reconsiders, tally this down as just one more broken promise.

(The writer is an energy fellow at the Independent Women's Forum and writer for National Review.)

Direct Link: http://bismarcktribune.com/news/opinion/guest/new-obama-administration-fracking-regs-especially-hurt-native-americans/article_3f881ccd-c99b-5783-866b-fca753e9d931.html

Guest Commentary: Native Americans have become a political pawn

By Ellie Reynolds
Posted: 03/29/2015 05:00:00 PM MDT



D Erlidawn Roy representing the Meskwaki, Ojibwe, Laguna Pueblo, and the Isleta Pueblo tribes, writes a message "I am not your mascot" on the face of LacyJay Lefthandbull, 7, from the Apache, Pueblo, and Lakota tribes, showing their support for HB 1165. (Kathryn Scott Osler, The Denver Post)

State Rep. Joe Salazar, D-Thornton, is sponsoring House Bill 1165, a misguided effort to ban Native American mascots in Colorado's public schools. On the heels of the Washington Redskins' national controversy, Salazar's legislation would prevent public schools from using a name, mascot, or school symbol referencing Native Americans unless that school is granted a waiver from the originating tribe.

I grew up outside of the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota. My great-grandfather, Orville Sr. "Paha Ska" Salway, was an honorary chief of the Oglala Sioux tribe. Many of the schools located on the reservations themselves have controversial school names and mascots, too. For instance, the Red Cloud Indian School mascot, the Crusader, uses the symbol of a buffalo skeleton with a Native American on a horse throwing an arrow as their mascot. This symbolizes their history.

As a member of the Oglala Sioux tribe, the suffocating political correctness policing of every aspect of our lives concerns me. In Salazar's well-intentioned attempt to prevent anyone from suffering offense, he is actually perpetuating our inability to even discuss important issues of race, power and American history.

The entire purpose of a school mascot is to provide a single rallying symbol from which a community can celebrate unity. In this day of perpetual outrage, the suppression of these symbols will do little more than to further highlight the divide between Natives and everyone else.

In a society so consumed by political correctness, this bill could be detrimental to its stated purpose and actually prevent meaningful conversations about other cultures and races. Salazar's bill mentions nothing about Trojans, Vikings, Fighting Irish, or any other historical or ethnic group. He carves out only Native-based mascots for scrutiny and elimination.

Rep. Paul Lundeen, R-Monument, asked a vital question recently as the bill was being heard in the House Education committee: "What other legislation has been needed to change mascots?"

Salazar responded, "There wasn't any."

As Lundeen pointed out, throughout history mascot changes based on political correctness have been community initiatives, not legislative answers. More government is not the answer to a community concern. Not only is this not the proper role of government, this bill is a form of government coercion with a bankrupting fine.

Native Americans have long fought government overreach into our culture. This is yet another example of government going way too far, creating a solution in search of a problem.

HB 1165 demands that public schools receive special permission from the Native tribe from which their mascot or team name originated for its use. If schools with Native mascots don't comply with this new legislation, they will be fined $25,000 per month until the situation is remedied. These massive fines will ultimately be paid with taxpayer dollars.

The fines are so large they could quickly wipe out a high school's entire athletics budget. They are so clearly designed to be punitive in nature, many schools across the state will just change their mascots rather than risk the fine.

Yes, some people are offended by Native-based mascots, but it is not the government's job to prevent every person from ever feeling offended. It sends the strong message to all Coloradans that discussion, celebration of and rallying behind a Native symbol might be so offensive to someone it requires a special carve-out. Especially to Colorado students, this message will stifle pride and unity. Salazar's legislation may, in fact, further alienate our culture from the mainstream.

This legislation doesn't teach Colorado's children to engage and to recognize our Native population; it teaches them to avoid offending us by avoiding the conversation at all.

Political correctness does not solve this, or any problem. In fact, by failing to acknowledge the contributions of Native American culture to the fabric of American culture, we create a greater problem, selectively erasing history.

Have we as a country become so haunted by political correctness and censorship that we have created the very barriers we say we want to overcome? When we aren't free to communicate on issues pertaining to race, gender, religion, or sexual orientation, we are doomed to perpetuate the stigma. We can be mindful of how our attitudes and actions are influenced by prejudices and how our words reinforce those prejudices and stereotypes without rules on discourse handed down from government.

HB 1165, otherwise known as the Mascot Bill, is forceful government censorship, and the cost is real conversation about Native American culture. This bill will affect Colorado public schools, our children and our communities at the high price tag of our freedom.

Ellie Reynolds is member of the Oglala Sioux tribe.

Direct Link: http://www.denverpost.com/opinion/ci_27801108/guest-commentary-native-americans-have-become-political-pawn

Gov. Brian Sandoval makes restoration of historical Indian school a top priority

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TAMPA, FL - AUGUST 28: Nevada Gov. Brian Sandoval speaks during the Republican National Convention at the Tampa Bay Times Forum on August 28, 2012 in Tampa, Florida. Today is the first full session of the RNC after the start was delayed due to Tropical Storm Isaac. (Photo by Mark Wilson/Getty Images) (2012 Getty Images)

CARSON CITY, Nev. (AP) – Generations of Nevada's Native Americans passed through the doors of the Stewart Indian School, some enduring painfully harsh treatment as their culture was stripped away while others left in later years with fond memories of time spent with members of other tribes.

For nearly a century, thousands of Indian students from around the western United States were enrolled in the boarding school on the outskirts of Carson City to get an education and learn vocational skills like masonry and farming.

Three decades after the school closed, the expansive college campus-like facility remains both a cultural touchstone for Nevada's Native American population and a neglected chapter of its history,

Now state lawmakers and Gov. Brian Sandoval are taking steps to preserve the historic campus and its role in the state's development. Two bills under consideration by the

Legislature would pay for repairs for some of the school's decaying buildings and create a cultural museum as well as carve out a bigger role for the state's Indian Commission.

"What we're trying to do here is not just tell the positive stories, or the happy stories," Indian Commission Director Sherry Rupert said. "But we have an opportunity to tell the whole story of what this school is, was and means."

For many Native Americans in northern Nevada, the Stewart Indian School is a story of forced assimilation and barbaric practices that nearly destroyed an entire way of life. Founded in 1890, the school initially served as a strict military-style boarding school. Federal authorities would forcibly round up children from nearby reservations and dump them off at the school, Rupert said.

Under a policy of forced assimilation, students would have their hair cut short and their names changed. They were forced to only use English, rather than native languages.

The federal policy was designed to weaken their cultural ties and make it easier for the government to take Indian land, Rupert said.

"What these boarding schools were all about were not to bring these savages to these schools to prepare them to go on to college and to better themselves," she said. "It was more to force them into these schools, force them to learn a different language, force them to retain a different value system, with the idea that when they grew up, the federal government could more easily get their land."

But as federal policy toward Native Americans shifted in the 1930s, the school became less military based and more of a normal high school that voluntarily took in Indian students from around the West.

Mary Lou Shorthorn attended the school from 1968 to 1972 and said she enjoyed her time despite the school's slightly rough-and-tumble reputation.

"It kind of got this image of a dump-off school, where you take someone who doesn't fit in, or can't fit in public schools," she said. "Now, I look at it as a prideful thing, because I learned a lot about the other cultures of people, and I got my education."

The commission is requesting a one-year $122,000 budget to help pay for a permanent cultural center at the school, with the eventual goal of turning the site in to a more tourist-friendly destination, Rupert said. Sandoval has taken a number of steps to support the school, including placing her on his Cabinet and mentioning the site during his State of the State address, she said.

AB 15 establishes funds for repairing school buildings by selling an unused 100-acre parcel of land between Carson City and Lake Tahoe. Although some Assembly Democrats expressed concern with selling state-owned land to pay for another project, the bill passed out the Assembly in February on a 41-1 vote.

Another bill, SB 63, gives the Indian Commission coordinating authority to manage other agencies with offices on the campus. The bill passed unanimously out of the Senate in March.

Though the school was closed in 1980, the school grounds are far from abandoned. The Indian Commission and state agencies use several well-preserved buildings on the campus for office space.

But for the occasional tourists visiting the expansive campus, decades of harsh Nevada weather is apparent in the faded stonework, numerous potholes and collapsing roofs in several of the older buildings.

Former state Historic Preservation director Ron James said the school grounds are on a short list for inclusion in the federal government's National Register of Historic Places, but continual decay and accumulating damage lowers the school's chances of being listed. "Once they start slipping away, they start slipping away really fast," he said.

Funding the school's restoration brings a benefit for all Nevadans, Rupert said.

"This isn't just about the Native people. This is about the community," she said. "This is about the state of Nevada."

Direct Link: http://latino.foxnews.com/latino/politics/2015/03/29/gov-brian-sandoval-makes-restoration-historical-indian-school-top-priority/

When Is Fashion Going To Stop Appropriating From Native American Culture?

By Marissa G. Muller

Native American activist Kim TallBear weighs in on DSquared2's offensive #DSquaw show and fashion's obsession with Aboriginal people

In fashion, it's a designer's job to create a world from the ground up season after season. Sometimes that means seeking inspiration from pre-existing ones, but all too often this hunt for a new muse leads to appropriating from other cultures. This past fashion month, Dsquared2's twin designers Dean and Dan Caten caught flack for sending rip-offs of Native American motifs down the runway. Worse still was that the title of the collection, "DSquaw," drew on a derogatory term for Native American women, and the equally offensive description of the runway show's aesthetic—"the enchantment of Canadian

Indian tribes" and "the confident attitude of the British aristocracy"—was posted to the fashion brand's Facebook.

Dsquared2's glamorization of colonialism feels particularly off-key considering the current headlines about violence against Aboriginal women and girls in Canada, not to mention fellow fashion brand Ralph Lauren's recent apology for its own offensive depictions of Native Americans. How could Canadian-born designers possibly be so tone deaf? That was one of the first questions that came to mind for Kim TallBear, a Austin-based scholar and activist for Native American visibility who has served on the council of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association. We spoke with TallBear about the history of the word "squaw" and why pop culture continues to have a problem with appropriation.



DSquared2's Fall 2015 Collection. Andreas Rentz/Getty Images

What was your first impression of the Dsquared2 show? It was shocking, but it wasn't. It was one more iteration of the same ol' thing—Ralph Lauren, Paul Frank, and celebrities wearing headdresses. To me, it looks completely unimaginative. It was another representation of Native American motifs as being predominantly part of the past. [The designers] had some text where they were talking about tribal design being combined with the assertive style of the monarchs—there's this colonial motif going on which is often how Native Americans are represented. The dominant narrative in colonial states and Canada is that indigenous people are almost disappearing, dying. The other thing I thought about when watching the show was the music. It was assertive. Subtly triumphant. It reminded me of the music you'd have in an Olympic Games montage of winning moments. It's the sort of music that's narrating the victory of settler colonialism.

Why do you think designers feel entitled to appropriate from Native American and Canadian culture? Often I notice the difference between how Native people and African

Americans might be treated. No doubt the discrimination against African Americans is terrible. We see that with the police violence against black bodies in the United States. But at least people know that black people are vibrant and alive. There is this sense that Native people are not alive in the same way so it enables a different kind of racism. It enables people to take ownership of Native Americans' motifs.

"There is this sense that Native people are not alive in the same way, so it enables a different kind of racism. It enables people to take ownership of Native Americans' motifs."

Do you think racism against Native Americans is more subtle? At least in the United States. In Canada, there's been [incidents of] missing and murdered Aboriginal women. From my perspective, as an American who works a bit in Canada, it seems like the red-white racial dividing line is more present up there. That's why it's so perplexing to me that this came from two Canadian designers.

What is the meaning of "squaw" and how has it changed throughout the years? It's shocking to me that people don't know the word "squaw" is offensive because it's like the N-word for blacks. Even though people have talked about reclaiming the word "squaw," that's certainly not for two white guys to do. For me, having grown up on a reservation in South Dakota, and then in an urban Native American community in Minnesota, it's always been a negative term. It refers to Native American women in a disparaging way. Many of us have actually been called that in our lifetime. In the history of colonization of the U.S., Native women—like black women—have been viewed as promiscuous, sexually devious, loose. How somebody cannot understand how that word is negative is interesting to me in a country where there's a lot of visibility of Aboriginal people. But that speaks to somebody's privilege.



Pharrell Williams on the cover Elle UK, July 2014.

This issue feels tragically redundant—it's almost every couple of months that you hear about another designer, magazine, or celebrity appropriating from Native American culture but the problem keeps persisting. Right, do they not read the news? It does feel like it happens once a month. Ralph Lauren just got zinged for this. Paul Frank did. Different singers have been wearing headdresses. Urban Outfitters got zinged for their Navajo panties. The Gap had the "Manifest Destiny" t-shirt.

Have you thought about why this appropriation keeps happening even though people are aware it's offensive? The most important thing that ties all of this together—the offensive Native American mascots, the wearing of headdresses by celebrities, and the missteps of the fashion industry—is about settler colonial culture making a moral and historical claim to Native American cultural patrimony. [The settler colonial standpoint is that] United States and Canada are the rightful heirs, not only of the land, but also the rightful heirs of the culture, history and representations.

Do you think it's possible to responsibly take inspiration from another culture without exploiting it? Obviously creative people get inspired by the symbols and designs of other people, but it's not just about being inspired. On Twitter, I saw Native American people showing their craft and showing something that was in the DSquared2 line—I'm telling you it looks like a ripoff. In those instances, it's important to talk to the craftspeople and people who look at fashion and think more about that. The difference between inspiration and appropriation is a hard call to make sometimes. I think one always has to think about the power politics and history. You don't create art or design in a vacuum. Ideally, anybody whose creating knowledge or art needs to think about where they fit within hierarchical relations within the nation. If you're white people of privilege you might want to think very carefully about whose symbols and designs you're drawing from.

What do you think needs to happen next? An apology. As far as I understand, Dean and Dan Caten of DSquared2 have said nothing, which I find very strange. Also an apology that's not lame, like the one Ralph Lauren gave. Don't apologize for offending anyone, apologize for doing something stupid and offensive. There are also lots of Native fashion designers. Maybe it's a call to figure out who they are and use it as a learning opportunity.

Posted: March 31, 2015

Direct Link: http://www.thefader.com/2015/03/31/dsquared-dsquaw-aboriginal-controversy-interview-kim-tallbear

From Shaman to Equinox: The Challenges and Failures of Indigenous Representation in Superhero Comics

by James Leask March 31, 2015 3:00 PM



DC's recent announcement of a new post-Convergence lineup of titles offered promising signs of diversification at the publisher, with Gene Luen Yang, securing a high profile assignment on *Superman* with John Romita, Jr., and fellow Asian American creators Sonny Liew, Ming Doyle, and Annie Wu picking up new titles, plus several LGBT creators on titles, including Steve Orlando on *Midnighter* and James Tynion IV on *Constantine*; and black author David F. Walker taking over *Cyborg*. It was great to see so many non-cis-straight-white-male demographic groups represented, both in characters and creative teams.

These announcements go some way towards correcting ongoing imbalances in the mainstream comic industry, but as ComicsAlliance editor Andrew Wheeler noted in his coverage; "this is the superhero comic version of diversity, where 'any' feels like a victory; any non-white creators, any women, any queer representation. Any is not enough." Thinking about that statement, a question occurred to me;

"Are there *any* indigenous characters or creators?"

It's the same question that always comes to my mind following big announcements like this. As I've written before, I'm aboriginal, and representation is important to me. Questions about representation have been a growing subject of discussion in comics over the past few years. But the discussions rarely seem to include indigenous people, and I rarely get an answer to my question, even if I can guess at it. It makes me worry that I'm annoying people by bringing it up.

It's not like there's *no* indigenous representation in comics. I can readily recite the names of the characters I read about as a kid. The warrior named Warpath on the *X-Men* books, and his palette-swapped counterpart on *Alpha Flight*, the shaman named Shaman. Even their names make me shake my head.

Then you've got Forge, a Cheyenne medicine man who left his people behind to work with technology instead, and who would rather you just not talk about that. There's Dani Moonstar, a really compelling aboriginal character whose powers seemed like an extension of her heritage, who lost her mutant powers and basically stopped being written as aboriginal, to the extent that she actually got tangled up in another culture's mythology when she became a Valkyrie. While I don't think aboriginal characters should be forced to represent aboriginal culture, seeing one of the few existing examples get absorbed by a mythology from another, predominantly Caucasian, culture feels like a loss.



Marc Laming

On the same day that DC announced its new line-up, Marvel announced an all-female Avengers team called *A-Force*. The cover features 25 women, white, black and Asian, and Dani's not one of them. None of the women are visibly aboriginal. Snowbird, Shaman's teammate on *Alpha Flight*, *is* there, though. She's the daughter of an Inuit goddess, and she's both white and blonde for reasons I can only guess at, scowl at, and decline to talk about in polite company.

But this is what it's often like to be aboriginal in comics. You either get to be so ludicrously stereotyped that you wouldn't look out of place in 1970s exploitation stories, or you lose any discernible element of aboriginal identity, whitewashed to the extent that you might actually become part of Norse myth.

There are other indigenous superheroes. You can even look them up in a convenient list, but you'll have to get past stereotypical names like Pow Wow Smith, or outright racist ones like Barbaric, to get to the legitimately-amazing-in-a-weird-way ones, like Super-Chief. (We do not talk about Tonto.)

One of my favorite characters ever, William Great Eagle, aka Man-of-Bats, is on the list. I love Man-of-Bats in a way that makes my soul ache; a Sioux medical doctor and veteran, he was inspired by Batman to fight crime, but found his heart drawn to healing and activism. He lived outside of the reservation in San Francisco, a place with a notably liberal reputation, but ended up moving back home to be with family, raise his son and help improve the plight of his people.



Chris Burnham

It made me so happy to see, in the pages of *Batman Incorporated* #7, William's base of operations. It's full of mentions of his activism, and of how he never gave up working to make things better, even if that mostly included tooling around in a decked-out pickup truck and getting arrested for civil disobedience. My heart swelled when it was revealed that many of the ills of his reservation were caused by an external political and criminal force, an invocation of the legacy of colonialism that I am still shocked made it into the pages of a DC comic. I smiled when he told Batman that any financial support he received from him would just go into his community, instead of to gadgets.

I bought the Man-of-Bats action figure the first day I could, and I look at it when I write. It's good to have that reminder, because Man-of-Bats and his son, Raven Red, have only been seen once since that issue, in a short story in 2013's *Batman Incorporated Special*.

As far as I know, only two writers other than Grant Morrison have ever written him: Nathan Fairbairn in the special and Sheldon Moldoff in *Batman* #86, almost sixty years previous. Man-of-Bats has appeared in eleven comics total, and I cling to them like a life raft.

To the best of my knowledge, an aboriginal creator has never had a hand in a comic that Man-of-Bats was involved in. For that matter, I couldn't name an aboriginal comic creator currently working at any of the major publishers.

It's hard not to imagine that the almost complete lack of aboriginal comic creators has a hand to play in how poorly aboriginal characters have fared. Without indigenous voices, the few representations feel like the flip of a coin. Heads; the warriors named Warpath and the shamans named Shaman, representations so ludicrously simplistic that they verge on redface. Tails; representations so whitewashed that the characters feel like a coloring mistake. If you're lucky, the coin lands on its edge and you get Man-of-Bats, a white writer's passion project who disappears once the writer moves on.

Being aboriginal in the comics community is being told how great it is that the coin came up heads.

If aboriginal people were more involved, a few things might change. Someone might let Marvel that, given that Snowbird is an Inuit demigoddess, having her guardian be Shaman, a Tsuu T'ina man from a Nation a thousand miles away from the Inuit, is kind of problematic.

Someone could also tell editors that not all aboriginal people live on reserves. According to recent census data, not even a quarter of aboriginal people actually live on reserves, yet aboriginal characters in comics are almost without fail either from or on a reserve. Not only does it erase non-reserve First Nations or Native American people, it erases entire aboriginal peoples like the Inuit and the Métis. I love Man-of-Bats, but he represents people who *aren't* me. He's not like me. I'm an urban-dwelling, white-passing Métis man with a family comprised of many skin tones. There's no one like me in these comics.

Typing that makes me feel very alone.


Moonshot cover by Stephen Gladue

Yet there are aboriginal people making comics. Publishers and readers alike would do well to check out Moonshot: The Indigenous Comics Collection, a Kickstarter-funded anthology by indigenous creators, now available for general pre-order. You may find some indigenous people in there who have even worked on your favorite books before. Seek them out. Listen to them. Pay them.

If we don't support indigenous creators in comics, things will remain the same: a desert of aboriginal creators and characters, where the few examples are either stereotypical beyond belief or whitewashed beyond identification. The few complex aboriginal characters that exist, like William Great Eagle or Miiyahbin Marten, DC's Equinox, will probably disappear once their creators leave their pet projects behind.

Equinox, announced to national attention in Canada, hasn't made much of a splash in comics past her announcement. She was pitched as a major selling point of *Justice League United*; a Cree character inspired by a real activist, Shannen Koostachin, created by Jeff Lemire, a writer familiar with her home of Moose Factory. Lemire, visited the community, talked with locals, and spent time in classrooms. I truly believe he understands the importance of this kind of representation, and I decided to pick up the book purely based on the evident passion behind his creation of a teenage Cree girl with the powers of the seasons.

But Equinox wasn't Ms. Marvel, another high profile teen girl superhero launched in 2014. It took until the sixth issue of *Justice League United* for her to get the focus that the announcement teased. Readers had to push through five issues about Adam Strange's unprofessional relationship with his assistant, and something about a science baby from space, while Green Arrow and Animal Man bickered, and Miiyahbin got a few pages per issue in the B or C-plot.


Mike McKone

Justice League United #5, though, was the best issue in the series, actually giving Miiyahbin the focus and working to establish her identity. The best moment saw her grandmother talking her through an issue that many aboriginal young people face when they leave their reserves: how to move onward and upward without losing a connection to who you are. But all of this came too late; Equinox was now relegated to the status of minor character in a series that readers had been led to hope would focus on her, and soon it would be announced that Lemire would leave the book after *Convergence*.

That news made me question whether I wanted the next creative team to continue writing Miiyahbin, given the relatively safe assumption that the creators would not be indigenous. The character probably wouldn't be a passion project, like she was to Lemire, or like Man-of-Bats and Raven Red were to Morrison. Will the next creators to write Miiyahbin also visit a community like Moose Factory or Moosonee? Will they know matters of culture, protocol or mythology? Will they let her be like any of the wonderful First Nations women I know, who enrich my life daily with everything they are?

Or will she just become another Warpath, a caricature in the background while the important people talk; or another Dani Moonstar, painted over until she matches the Ikea furniture?

I feel guilty in thinking that maybe getting Man-of-Bats' fate would be best for her; ignored and forgotten, until the next new aboriginal character comes along, and the coin gets flipped again.

I don't know if anyone like me — *truly* like me — will ever be in a major publisher's comic.

Read More: http://comicsalliance.com/indigenous-representation-superhero-comics/?trackback=tsmclip

Australia’s Aboriginal war heroes 'finally' recognised by memorial sculpture

Sculpture in Sydney’s Hyde Park unveiled as tribute to Aborigines who fought for Australia each of its wars since the Boer War



Dancers from the Bangarra Aboriginal dance troupe perform in front of the Yininmadyemi sculpture Photo: EPA

By Jonathan Pearlman, Sydney

12:39PM BST 31 Mar 2015

A striking sculpture featuring a series of 23-foot white-tipped bullets has been unveiled in **Australia** to “finally” recognise the Aboriginal soldiers who fought and died for the country, even though many could not vote.

The four giant 1.5-ton marble and steel bullets, alongside three fallen shells, were installed in Sydney’s Hyde Park near the Anzac War Memorial, the city’s main tribute to the nation’s lost soldiers.

The bullets statue was designed by Tony Albert, an Aboriginal artist whose grandfather fought for Australia in **World War II**. He said the sculpture was intended to be “confronting” and was long overdue.

Aboriginal troops have fought for Australia in each of its wars since the **Boer War**, though for years **they were unable to vote and were not counted in the census**.

Thousands of Aborigines volunteered for service in **World War I** even though Australia did not initially allow them to fight. From 1917, when more troops were needed, Australia only permitted “half-castes” with one **European** parent to enlist.

Full-blooded Aborigines were allowed to enlist from World War II, and Aborigines were given the right to vote federally in 1962 and in all states by 1965.



Full-blooded Aborigines were allowed to enlist from World War II (EPA)

Aboriginal groups have long campaigned for proper recognition of their service.

“One way to get this recognition was to advocate for a memorial and the bullets are a great idea,” Ray Minniecon, from the Coloured Diggers movement, told **Sydney’s Daily Telegraph**.

“On the battlefield, bullets don’t discriminate; they kill black people or white people, so when it came to war, all of our Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander servicemen and woman were treated as equals.

"However, when our men and women came home to their various states they weren’t given any recognition. They had to come back and fight another battle, but this time against racism.”

The bullets and shells were inspired by the story of Mr Albert’s grandfather, who was one of four soldiers to survive an encounter with **Italian** forces. Three soldiers died in the battle.



The bullets and shells were inspired by the story of Mr Albert's grandfather (EPA)

"These are stories that are not written into history; they aren't represented in our institutions," Mr Albert told Fairfax Media.

"It's long overdue. It's confronting. It might ruffle a few feathers but they are feathers that need to be ruffled."

"Aunty" Jenny Beale, whose father fought in World War II, said: "It's taken such time to get here. My dad would have been 104 this year and here I am finally standing at a monument, finally to recognise what he contributed to this country."

Direct Link:
http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/australiaandthepacific/australia/11506185/Australias-Aboriginal-war-heroes-finally-recognised-by-memorial-sculpture.html

US Attorneys Cotter and Martinez to Lead AG's Native American Issues Subcommittee

ICTMN Staff
4/1/15

Attorney General Eric Holder recently announced the appointment of two U.S. Attorneys to the Native American Issues Subcommittee (NAIS) of the Attorney General's Advisory Committee of U.S. Attorneys (AGAC).

Michael Cotter, District of Montana, and Damon P. Martinez, District of New Mexico, were named chair and vice-chair, respectively of NAIS.

"Throughout my tenure as Attorney General, the Native American Issues Subcommittee has been a critical source of expertise, guidance, and inspiration in addressing the

department's goals of reducing crime and strengthening communities across Indian country," Holder said. "As public servants from districts with significant responsibilities related to tribal nations, Mike Cotter and Damon Martinez possess a wealth of knowledge and expertise that will serve to promote the mission of the NAIS and benefit Indian country as a whole. I am confident that, with their dedication, their vision, and their leadership, we will continue to deliver on this department's important work and to fulfill this nation's historic relationship of trust and cooperation with Native American and Alaska Native people."

Cotter has served on the NAIS since 2009 and he replaces Tim Purdon, former U.S. Attorney for North Dakota who recently left for private practice. Montana has been a prime example of the Attorney General's 2010 Indian Country Initiative with prosecutors assigned to individual reservations where they hold monthly meetings with tribal and federal partners. According to a Department of Justice press release the strategy includes utilizing tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorneys, tribal prosecutors who focus on domestic violence matters. Prosecutors, tribal prosecutors and law enforcement also hold bi-monthly case meetings to develop cross-disciplinary trainings, and presentations to first responders on the new federal strangulation statutes in Indian country.

Martinez was appointed to NAIS in May 2014 while continuing and expanding the implementation of the Attorney General's 2010 Indian Country Initiative in New Mexico – home to 22 Indian pueblos and tribes. "Through the Tribal Special Assistant U.S. Attorney (Tribal SAUSA) Pilot Project, sponsored by the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women, federal prosecutors train tribal prosecutors and officers in federal law, procedure and investigative techniques so that every viable sexual and violent offense against Native women is prosecuted in either federal court or tribal court, or both," the DOJ release said.

New Mexico, partnering with the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy and the Bureau of Indian Affair's Office of Justice Services, established one of the first HIDTA drug task forces in Indian country. The task force also supports two Indian Country Project Safe Neighborhood programs that focus on reducing gun violence in tribal communities.

New Mexico has also been working to develop one of the nation's Indian country reentry programs which will launch in May of this year. The program is in coordination with the Attorney General's Smart on Crime Initiative. Prosecutors have partnered with the BIA to train tribal, local and state officers in an effort to get them commissioned as special federal officers of the BIA and enhance public safety.

U.S. Attorneys from states containing Indian country comprise the NAIS which focuses exclusively on Indian country issues, both criminal and civil and responsible for recommending new policy initiatives to the Attorney General. The AGAC was established in 1973 to serve as a voice of the U.S. Attorneys in an advisory role to the Attorney General on policy, management, and operational issues impacting the offices around the country.

Read more at http://indiancountrytodaymedianetwork.com/2015/04/01/us-attorneys-cotter-and-martinez-lead-ags-native-american-issues-subcommittee-159839